



LES MISERABLES

by
VICTOR HUGO



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LES MISÉRABLES

LES MISÉRABLES is probably Victor Hugo's best-known and best-loved work.

It is primarily the inspiring story of a soul made great through suffering, courage, and heroism. But it is also a story of the humanity Hugo loved: the humanity of Jean Valjean, petty thief and galley-slave, forever haunted by the past; the humanity of the hated Javert of the Police, who hounded his victims as he was hounded by his own soul; the humanity of beautiful Cosette, who found love in the midst of a revolution.

In LES MISÉRABLES you will find scene after scene tense with action and excitement. Not even Balzac has equalled Hugo in his sense of drama or his powers of invention.

You will re-read with pleasure this cleverly-edited version of one of the greatest and most courageous stories ever written.

LES MISERABLES

PART I: THE SOUL OF HUMANITY

CHAPTER I

In 1815, M. Charles François-Bienvenu Myriel was Bishop of D——. He was a man of seventy-five, and had occupied the bishopric of D—— since 1806. Although it in no manner concerns, even in the remotest degree, what we have to relate, it may not be useless, were it only for the sake of exactness in all things, to notice here the reports and gossip which had arisen on his account from the time of his arrival in the diocese.

Be it true or false, what is said about men often has as much influence upon their lives, and especially upon their destinies, as what they do.

M. Myriel was the son of a councillor of the Parlement of Aix; of the rank given to the legal profession. His father, intending him to inherit his place, had contracted a marriage for him at the early age of eighteen or twenty, according to a widespread custom among parliamentary families. Charles Myriel, notwithstanding this marriage, had, it was said, been an object of much attention. His person was admirably moulded; although of slight figure, he was elegant and graceful; all the earlier part of his life had been devoted to the world and to its pleasures. The Revolution came, events crowded upon each other; the parliamentary families, decimated, hunted and pursued, were soon dispersed. M. Charles Myriel, on the first outbreak of the Revolution, emigrated to Italy. His wife died there of a lung complaint with which she had long been threatened. They had no children. What followed in the fate of M. Myriel? The decay of the old French society, the fall of his own family, the tragic sights of '93, still more fearful, perhaps, to the exiles who beheld them from afar, magnified by fright—did these arouse in him ideas of renunciation and of solitude? Was he, in the midst of one of the reveries or emotions which then consumed his life, suddenly attacked by one of those mysterious and terrible blows which sometimes overwhelm, by smiting to the heart, the man whom public disasters could not shake, by aiming at life or fortune? No

one could have answered; all that was known was that when he returned from Italy he was a priest.

When M. Myriel came to D—— he was accompanied by an old lady, Mademoiselle Baptistine, who was his sister, ten years younger than himself.

Their only domestic was a woman of about the same age as Mademoiselle Baptistine, who was called Madame Magloire, and who, after having been the servant of M. le Curé, now took the double title of *femme de chambre* of Mademoiselle and housekeeper of Monseigneur.

Mademoiselle Baptistine was a tall, pale, thin, sweet person. She fully realised the idea which is expressed by the word "respectable"; for it seems as if it were necessary that a woman should be a mother to be venerable. She was more a spirit than a virgin mortal. Her form was shadow-like, hardly enough body to convey the thought of sex—a little earth containing a spark—large eyes, always cast down; a pretext for the soul to remain on earth. Madame Magloire was a little, white, fat, jolly, bustling old woman, always out of breath, caused first by her activity, and then by the asthma.

M. Myriel had a yearly dependence of fifteen hundred francs, upon which the three old people subsisted.

His coming made a fête. One would have said that he dispensed warmth and light as he passed along. Old people and children would come to their doors for the Bishop as they would for the sun. He blessed, and was blessed in return. Whoever was in need of anything was shown the way to his house.

At half-past eight in the evening he took supper with his sister, Madame Magloire standing behind them and waiting on the table. Nothing could be more frugal than this meal. If, however, the Bishop had one of his curés to supper, Madame Magloire improved the occasion to serve her master with some excellent fish from the lakes, or some fine game from the mountain. Every curé was the pretext for a fine meal; the Bishop did not interfere. With these exceptions, there was rarely seen upon his table more than boiled vegetables or bread warmed with oil. And so it came to be a saying in the city, "When the Bishop does not entertain a curé, he entertains a Trappist."

After supper he would chat for half-an-hour with Mademoiselle Baptistine and Madame Magloire, and then go to his own room and write, sometimes upon loose sheets, sometimes on the margin of one of his folios. He was a well-read and even a learned man.

Every room in the house, on the ground floor as well as in the upper storey, without exception was whitewashed as is the custom in barracks and hospitals. The floors of the chambers were paved with red brick, which were scoured every week, and before the the beds straw matting was spread. In all respects the house was kept by the two women exquisitely neat from top to bottom. This was the only luxury that the Bishop would permit. He would say, "That takes nothing from the poor."

We must confess that he still retained of what he had formerly, six silver dishes, and a silver soup ladle, which Madame Magloire contemplated every day with new joy as they shone on the coarse, white linen table-cloth. And with this silver ware should be counted two large, massive silver candlesticks, which he inherited from a great-aunt. These candlesticks held two wax candles and their place was upon the Bishop's mantel. When he had anyone to dinner, Madame Magloire lighted the two candles and placed the two candlesticks upon the table.

There was in the Bishop's chamber, at the head of his bed, a small cupboard in which Madame Magloire placed the six silver dishes and the great ladle every evening. But the key was never taken out of it.

Not a door in the house had a lock. The door of the dining-room, which opened into the cathedral grounds, was formerly loaded with bars and bolts like the door of a prison. The Bishop had had all this iron-work taken off, and the door, by night as well as by day, was closed only with a latch. The passer-by, whatever might be the hour, could open it with a simple push. At first the two women had been very much troubled at the door being never locked; but Monseigneur de D—— said to them: "Have bolts on your own doors if you like." They shared his confidence at last, or at least acted as if they shared it. Madame Magloire alone had occasional attacks of fear. As to the Bishop, the reason for this is explained, or at least pointed out in these three lines written by him on the margin of a Bible: "This is the shade of meaning: the door of the physician should never be closed; the door of a priest should always be open."

In nine years, by dint of holy works and gentle manners, Monseigneur Bienvenu as he was affectionately called, had filled the city of D—— with a kind of tender and filial veneration. At the first view, and to one who saw him for the first time, he was nothing more than a good man. But if one spent a few hours with him and saw him in a thoughtful mood, little by little the good man became transfigured, and became ineffably imposing; his large and serious forehead, rendered noble by

his white hair, became noble also by meditation; majesty was developed from this goodness, yet the radiance of goodness remained; and one felt something of the emotion that he would experience in seeing a smiling angel slowly spread his wings without ceasing to smile. Respect, unutterable respect, penetrated you by degrees, and made its way to your heart; and you felt that you had before you one of those strong, tried and indulgent souls, where the thought is so great that it cannot be other than gentle.

CHAPTER II

An hour before sunset, on the evening of a day in the beginning of October, 1815, a man travelling afoot entered the little town of D—. The few persons who at this time were at their windows or their doors regarded this traveller with a sort of distrust. It would have been hard to find a passer-by more wretched in appearance. He was a man of middle height, stout and hardy in the strength of maturity; he might have been forty-six or seven. A slouched leather cap half hid his face, bronzed by the sun and wind, and dripping with sweat. His shaggy breast was seen through the coarse yellow shirt which at the neck was fastened by a small silver anchor; he wore a cravat twisted like a rope; coarse blue trousers, worn and shabby, white on one knee and with holes in the other; an old ragged grey blouse patched on one side with a piece of green cloth sewed with twine; upon his back was a well-filled knapsack, strongly buckled and quite new. In his hand he carried an enormous knotted stick; his stockingless feet were in hob-nailed shoes; his hair was cropped and his beard long.

The sweat, the heat, his long walk, and the dust added an indescribable meanness to his tattered appearance.

His hair was shorn but bristly, for it had begun to grow a little, and seemingly had not been cut for some time. 'Nobody knew him; he was evidently a traveller. Whence had he come? From the south—perhaps from the sea; for he was making his entrance into D— by the same road by which, seven months before, the Emperor Napoleon went from Cannes to Paris. This man must have walked all day long; for he appeared very weary. Some women of the old city, which is at the lower part of the town, had seen him stop under the trees of the boulevard Gassendi, and drink at the fountain which is at the end of the promenade. He must have been very thirsty, for some children who followed him saw him stop not two hundred

Further on and drink again at the fountain in the market

He took the principal street; he walked at random, slinking like a house, like a sad and humiliated man; he did not once look round. If he had turned, he would have seen the inn-door of the *Croix-de-Colbas* standing in his doorway with all the peasants, and passers-by gathered about him, speaking excitedly, and pointing him out; and from the looks of fear and pity which were exchanged, he would have guessed that from long his arrival would be the talk of the town.

He saw nothing of all this; people overwhelmed with trouble do not look behind; they know only too well that misfortune follows them.

He walked along in this way some time, going by chance into streets unknown to him, and forgetting fatigue, as is the case in sorrow. Suddenly he felt a pang of hunger; night was falling, and he looked around to see if he could not discover a place to stop.

The good inn was closed against him; he sought some public tavern, some poor cellar.

Just then a light shone at the end of the street; he passed the prison: an iron chain hung from the door attached to a wall. He rang.

The grating opened.

"Monsieur Turnkey," said he, taking off his cap respectfully, "will you open and let me stay here to-night?"

The man answered:

"What prison is not a tavern: get yourself arrested and we will leave you."

The grating closed.

About eight o'clock in the evening: as he did not find any place to stop, he walked at hazard.

He came to the Prefecture, then to the Seminary; on the way by the Cathedral square, he shook his fist at the

corner of this square stands a printing-office; there he first printed the proclamations of the Emperor and the Imperial Guard to the army, brought from the island of Elba, and dictated by Napoleon himself.

Exhausted with fatigue, and hoping for nothing better, he lay down on a stone bench in front of this printing-office.

Just then an old woman came out of the church. She saw the man lying there in the dark, and said:

"What are you doing here, my friend?"

He replied harshly, and with anger in his tone:

"You see, my good woman, I am going to sleep."

The good woman, who really merited the name, was, Madame la Marquise de R——.

"Why don't you go to the inn?"

"Because I have no money."

"Alas!" said Madame de R——, "I have only four sous in my purse."

"Give them, then." The man took the four sous, and Madame de R—— continued:

"You cannot find lodgings for so little in an inn. But have you tried? You cannot pass the night so. You must be cold and hungry. They should give you lodging for charity."

"I have knocked at every door."

"Well, what then?"

"Everybody has driven me away."

The good woman touched the man's arm and pointed out to him, on the other side of the square, a little low house beside the bishop's palace.

"You have knocked at every door?" she said.

"Yes."

"Have you knocked at that one there?"

"No."

"Knock there."

CHAPTER III

That evening, after his walk in the town, the Bishop remained quite late in his room. He was busy with great work on Duty, which unfortunately is left incomplete.

At eight o'clock he was still at his work, writing with some inconvenience on little slips of paper, with a large book open on his knees, when Madame Magloire, as usual, came in to take the silver from the panel near the bed. A moment after, the Bishop knowing that the table was laid, and that his sister was perhaps waiting, closed his book and went into the dining-room.

At this moment there was a violent knock on the door.

"Come in!" said the Bishop.

The door opened. A man entered.

That man, we know already; it was the traveller we have been wandering about in search of a lodging.

He came in, took one step, and paused, leaving the door open behind him. He had his knapsack on his back, his stick in his hand, and a rough, hard, tired, and fierce look in his eyes, as seen by the firelight. He was hideous. It was an apparition of ill omen.

Madame Magloire had not even the strength to scream. She stood trembling with her mouth open.

Mademoiselle Baptistine turned, saw the man enter, and started up half-alarmed; then, slowly turning her back again towards the fire, she looked at her brother, and her face resumed its usual calmness and serenity.

The Bishop looked upon the man with a tranquil eye.

As he was opening his mouth to speak, doubtless to ask the stranger what he wanted, the man, leaning with both hands on his club, glanced from one to another in turn, and without waiting for the Bishop to speak, said in a loud voice:

"See here! My name is Jean Valjean. I am a convict; I have been nineteen years in the galleys. Four days ago I was set free, and started for Pontarlier, which is my destination; during these four days I have walked from Toulon. To-day I have walked twelve leagues. When I reached this place this evening I went to an inn, and they sent me away on account of my yellow passport, which I had shown at the Mayor's office, as was necessary. I went to the prison, and the turnkey would not let me in. I went into the fields to sleep beneath the stars; there were no stars: I thought it would rain, and there was no good God to stop the drops, so I came back to town to get the shelter of some doorway. There in the square I lay down upon a stone; a good woman showed me your house, and said, 'Knock there!' I have knocked. What is this place? Are you an inn? I have money; my savings one hundred and nine francs and fifteen sous which I have earned in the galleys by my work for nineteen years. I will pay. What do I care? I have money. I am very tired—twelve leagues on foot, and I am so hungry. Can I stay?"

"Madame Magloire," said the Bishop, "put on another plate."

The man took three steps, and came near the lamp which stood on the table. "Stop," he exclaimed, as if he had not been understood, "not that; did you understand me? I am a galley-slave—a convict—I am just from the galleys. There you have it! Everybody has thrust me out; will you receive me? Is this an inn? Can you give me something to eat, and a place to sleep? Have you a stable?"

"Madame Magloire," said the Bishop, "put some sheets on the bed in the alcove."

Madame Magloire went out to fulfil her orders.

The Bishop turned to the man:

"Monsieur, sit down and warm yourself: we are going to take supper presently, and your bed will be made ready while you sup."

At last the man quite understood: his face, the expression of which till then had been gloomy and hard, now expressed stupefaction, doubt, and joy, and became absolutely wonderful. He began to stutter like a madman.

True? "What! You will keep me? you won't drive me away? a convict! call me *Monsieur* and don't say 'Get out, dog!' as everybody else does. Besides, I have money: I will pay well. I beg your pardon, *Monsieur* Innkeeper, what is your name? I will pay you all you say. You are a fine man. You are an innkeeper ain't you?"

"I am a priest who lives here," said the Bishop.

"A priest," said the man. "Oh, noble priest! Then you do not ask any money? You are the curé, ain't you? the curé of this big church? Yes, that's it. How stupid I am; I didn't notice your cap."

While he was talking, the Bishop shut the door, which he had left wide open.

Madame Magloire brought in a plate and set it on the table.

"Madame Magloire," said the Bishop, "put this plate as near the fire as you can." Then turning towards his guest, he added: "The night wind is raw in the Alps; you must be cold, *Monsieur*."

Every time he said this word *Monsieur*, with his gently solemn and heartily hospitable voice, the man's countenance lighted up. *Monsieur* to a convict is a glass of water to a man dying of thirst at sea. Ignominy thirsts for respect.

"The lamp," said the Bishop, "gives a very poor light."

Madame Magloire understood him, and going to his bed-chamber, took from the mantel the two silver candlesticks, lighted the candles, and placed them on the table.

"*Monsieur* Curé," said the man, "you are good; you don't despise me. You take me into your house: you light the candles for me, and I haven't hid from you where I come from and how miserable I am."

The Bishop, who was sitting near him, touched his hand gently and said: "You need not tell me who you are. This is not my house; it is the house of Christ. It does not ask any comer whether he has a name, but whether he has an affliction. You are suffering; you are hungry and thirsty; be welcome. And do not thank me; do not tell me that I take you into my house. This is the home of no man, except him who needs an asylum. I tell you, who are a traveller, that you are more at home here than I; whatever is here is yours. What need have I to know your name? Besides, before you told me, I knew it."

The man opened his eyes in astonishment.

"Really? You knew my name?"

"Yes," answered the Bishop, "your name is my brother."

"Stop, stop, Monsieur Curé," exclaimed the man, "I was famished when I came in, but you are so kind that now I don't know what I am; that is all gone."

Meantime Madame Magloire had served up supper; it consisted of soup made of water, oil, bread, and salt, a little pork, a scrap of mutton, a few figs, a green cheese, and a large loaf of rye bread. She had, without asking, added to the usual dinner of the Bishop a bottle of fine old Mauves wine.

The Bishop's countenance was lighted up with this expression of pleasure, peculiar to hospitable natures. "To supper!" he said briskly, as was his habit when he had a guest. He seated the man at his right. Mademoiselle Baptistine, perfectly quiet and natural, took her place at his left.

The Bishop said the blessing, and then served the soup himself, according to his usual custom. The man fell to eating greedily.

Suddenly the Bishop said: "It seems to me something is lacking on the table."

The fact was, that Madame Magloire had set out only the three plates which were necessary. Now it was the custom of the house, when the Bishop had anyone to supper, to set all six of the silver plates on the table, an innocent display. This graceful appearance of luxury was a sort of childlikeness which was full of charm in this gentle but astute household, which elevated poverty to dignity.

Madame Magloire understood the remark; without a word she went out, and in a moment afterwards the three plates for which the Bishop had asked were shining on the cloth, symmetrically arranged before each of three guests.

After supper, having said good-night to his sister, Monseigneur Bienvenu took one of the silver candlesticks from the table, handed the other to his guest, and said to him:

"Monsieur, I will show you to your room."

The man followed him. Just as they were passing through the Bishop's room Madame Magloire was putting up the silver in the cupboard at the head of the bed. It was the last thing she did every night before going to bed.

The Bishop left his guest in the alcove, before a clean white bed. The man set down the candlestick upon a small table.

"Come," said the Bishop, "a good night's rest to you: to-morrow morning, before you go, you shall have a cup of warm milk from our cows."

"Thank you, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the man

CHAPTER IV

Towards the middle of the night, Jean Valjean awoke.

Jean Valjean was born of a poor peasant family of Brie. In his childhood he had not been taught to read; when he grew up, he chose the occupation of a pruner at Faverolles. His mother's name was Jeanne Mathieu; his father's Jean Valjean or Vlajeau, probably a nickname, a contraction of *Voilà Jean*.

Jean Valjean was of a thoughtful disposition, but not sad, which is characteristic of affectionate natures. Upon the whole, however, there was something torpid and insignificant, in the appearance at least, of Jean Valjean. He had lost his parents when very young. His mother died of malpractice in a milk-fever; his father, a pruner before him, was killed by a fall from a tree. Jean Valjean now had but one relative left, his sister, a widow with seven children, girls and boys. This sister had brought up Jean Valjean, and, as long as her husband lived, she had taken care of her young brother. Her husband died, leaving the eldest of these children eight, the youngest one year old. Jean Valjean had just reached his twenty-fifth year; he took the father's place, and, in his turn, supported the sister who had reared him. This he did naturally, as a duty, and even with a sort of moroseness on his part. His youth was spent in rough and ill-recompensed labour; he never was known to have a sweetheart; he had not time to be in love.

He earned in the pruning season eighteen sous a day: after that he hired out as reaper, workman, teamster, or labourer. He did whatever he could find to do. His sister worked also, but what could she do with seven little children? It was a sad group, which misery was grasping and closing upon, little by little. There was a very severe winter; Jean had no work, the family had no bread: literally, no bread, and seven children.

One Sunday night, Maubert Isabeau, the baker on the Place de l'Eglise, in Faverolles, was just going to bed when he heard a violent blow against the barred window of his shop. He got down in time to see an arm thrust through the aperture made by the blow of a fist on the glass. The arm seized a loaf of bread and took it out. Isabeau rushed out; the thief used his legs valiantly; Isabeau pursued him and caught him. The thief had thrown away the bread, but his arm was still bleeding. It was Jean Valjean.

All that happened in 1795. Jean Valjean was brought before

the tribunals of the time for "burglary at night, in an inhabited house." He had a gun which he used as well as any marksman in the world, and was something of a poacher, which hurt him, there being a natural prejudice against poachers. The poacher, like the smuggler, approaches very nearly to the brigand.

Jean Valjean was found guilty; the terms of the code were explicit: in our civilisation they are fearful hours, such as those when the criminal law pronounces shipwreck upon a man. What a mournful moment is that in which society withdraws itself and gives up a thinking being for ever. Jean Valjean was sentenced to five years in the galleys.

He was taken to Toulon, at which place he arrived after a journey of twenty-seven days, on a cart, the chain still about his neck. At Toulon he was dressed in a red blouse, all his past life was effaced, even to his name. He was no longer Jean Valjean: he was Number 24,601. What became of the sister? What became of the seven children? Who troubled himself about that? What becomes of the handful of leaves of the young tree when it is sawn at the trunk? Through the remainder of this sad history we shall not meet them again.

Near the end of this fourth year, his chance of liberty came to Jean Valjean. His comrades helped him as they always do in that dreary place, and he escaped. He wandered two days in freedom through the fields; if it is freedom to be hunted, to turn your head each moment, to tremble at the least noise, to be afraid of everything, of the smoke of a chimney, the passing of a man, the baying of a dog, the gallop of a horse, the striking of a clock, of the day because you see, and of the night because you do not; on the road, of the path, the bush, of sleep. During the evening of the second day he was retaken; he had neither eaten nor slept for thirty-six hours. The maritime tribunal extended his sentence three years for this attempt, which made eight. In the sixth year his turn of escape came again; he tried it, but failed again. He did not answer at roll-call, and the alarm cannon was fired. At night the people of the vicinity discovered him hidden beneath the keel of a vessel on the stocks; he resisted the galley guard which seized him. Escape and resistance. This the provisions of the special code punished by an addition of five years, two with the double chain. Thirteen years. The tenth year his turn came round again; he made another attempt with no better success. Three years for this new attempt. Sixteen years. And finally, I think it was in the thirteenth year, he made yet another, and was retaken after an absence of only four hours. Three years for these four hours. Nineteen years. In October,

1815, he was set at large: he had entered in 1796 for having broken a pane of glass, and taken a loaf of bread.

Jean Valjean entered the galleys sobbing and shuddering: he went out hardened; he entered in despair; he went out sullen.

There was at Toulon a school for the prisoners conducted by some not very skilful friars, where the most essential branches were taught to such of those poor men as were willing. He was one of the willing ones. He went to school at forty and learned to read, write and cipher. He felt that to increase his knowledge was to strengthen his hatred. Under certain circumstances, instructions and enlightenment may serve as rallying-points for evil.

It is sad to tell; but after having tried society, which had caused his misfortunes, he tried Providence, which created society, and condemned it also.

Thus, during those nineteen years of torture and slavery, did this soul rise and fall at the same time. Light entered on the one side, and darkness on the other.

Jean Valjean was not, we have seen, of an evil nature. His heart was still right when he arrived at the galleys. While there he condemned society, and felt that he became wicked; he condemned Providence, and felt that he became impious.

We must not omit one circumstance, which is, that in physical strength he far surpassed all the other inmates of the prison. At hard work, at twisting a cable, or turning a windlass, Jean Valjean was equal to four men. He would sometimes lift and hold enormous weights on his back, and would occasionally act the part of what is called a *jack*, or what was called in old French an *orgeuil*, whence came the name, we may say by the way, of the Rue Montorgeuil near the Halles of Paris. His comrades had nicknamed him Jean the Jack. At one time, while the balcony of the City Hall of Toulon was undergoing repairs, one of Puget's admirable caryatides, which support the balcony, slipped from its place, and was about to fall, when Jean Valjean, who happened to be there, held it up on his shoulder till the workmen came.

But from year to year his soul had withered more and more, slowly, but fatally. With this withered heart he had a dry eye. When he left the galleys he had not shed a tear for nineteen years.

CHAPTER V

As the cathedral clock struck two, Jean Valjean awoke.

What awakened him was too good a bed. For nearly twenty years he had not slept in a bed, and, although he had not undressed, the sensation was too novel not to disturb his sleep. Sleep comes at first much more readily than it comes again. Such was the case with Jean Valjean. He could not get to sleep again, and so he began to think.

He was in one of those moods in which the ideas we have in our minds are perturbed. Many thoughts came to him, but there was one which continually presented itself, and which drove away all others. What that thought was we shall tell directly. He had noticed the six silver plates and the large ladle that Madame Magloire had put on the table.

Those six silver plates took possession of him. There they were, within a few steps. At the very moment that he passed through the middle room to reach the one he was now in, the old servant was placing them in a little cupboard at the head of the bed. He had marked that cupboard well: on the right, coming from the dining-room. They were solid, and old silver. With the big ladle they would bring at least two hundred francs; double what he had got for nineteen years' labour.

He rose to his feet, hesitated for a moment longer, and listened; all was still in the house; he walked straight and cautiously towards the window, which he could discern. The night was not very dark; there was a full moon, across which large clouds were driving before the wind. On reaching the window, Jean Valjean examined it. It had no bars, opened into the garden, and was fastened, according to the fashion of the country, with a little wedge only. He opened it; but as the cold, keen air rushed into the room, he closed it again immediately. He looked into the garden with that absorbed look which studies rather than sees. The garden was enclosed with a white wall, quite low, and readily scaled. Beyond, against the sky, he distinguished the tops of trees at equal distances apart, which showed that this wall separated the garden from an avenue or a lane planted with trees.

When he had taken this observation, he turned like a man whose mind is made up, went to his alcove, took his haversack, opened it, fumbled in it, took out something which he laid upon the bed, put his shoes into one of his pockets, tied up his bundle, swung it upon his shoulders, put on his cap, and

pulled the vizor down over his eyes, felt for his stick, and went and put it in the corner of the window, then returned to the bed, and resolutely took up the object which he had laid on it. It looked like a short iron bar, pointed at one end like a spear. In the day-time it would have been seen to be nothing but a miner's drill. At that time the convicts were sometimes employed in quarrying stone on the high hills that surround Toulon, and they often had miners' tools in their possession. Miners' drills are of solid iron, terminating at the lower end in a point, by means of which they are sunk into the rock.

He took the drill in his right hand, and holding his breath, with stealthy steps he moved towards the door of the next room, which was the Bishop's, as we know. On reaching the door, he found it unlatched. The Bishop had not closed it.

Jean Valjean listened. Not a sound.

He pushed the door lightly with the end of his finger, with the stealthy and timorous carefulness of a cat. The door yielded to the pressure with a silent, imperceptible movement, which made the opening a little wider.

He waited a moment, and then pushed the door again more boldly. His only thought was to make an end of it quickly. He took one step and was in the room.

A deep calm filled the chamber. Here and there indistinct, confused forms could be distinguished; which by day were papers scattered over a table, open folios, books piled on a stool, an arm-chair with clothes on it, a *prie-Dieu*, but now were only dark corners and whitish spots. Jean Valjean advanced, carefully avoiding the furniture. At the further end of the room he could hear the equal and quiet breathing of the sleeping Bishop.

Suddenly he stopped: he was near the bed, he had reached it sooner than he thought.

Nature sometimes joins her effects and her appearances to our acts with a sort of serious and intelligent appropriateness, as if she would compel us to reflect. For nearly a half-hour a great cloud had darkened the sky. At the moment when Jean Valjean paused before the bed, the cloud broke as if purposely, and a ray of moonlight crossed the high window, suddenly lighted up the Bishop's pale face. He slept tranquilly. He was almost entirely dressed, though in bed, on account of the cold nights of the lower Alps, with a dark woollen garment which covered his arms to the wrists. His head had fallen on the pillow in the unstudied attitude of slumber, over the side of the bed hung his hand, ornamented with a pastoral ring, and which had done so many good deeds, so many

pious acts. His entire countenance was lit up with a vague expression of content, hope and happiness. It was more than a smile and almost a radiance. On his forehead rested the indescribable reflection of an unseen light. The souls of the upright in sleep have vision of a mysterious heaven.

Jean Valjean was in the shadow with the iron drill in his hand, erect, motionless, terrified at this radiant figure. He had never seen anything comparable to it. This confidence filled him with fear. The moral world has no greater spectacle than this; a troubled and restless conscience on the verge of committing an evil deed, contemplating the sleep of a good man.

He did not remove his eyes from the old man. The only thing which was plain from his attitude and his countenance was a strange indecision. You would have said he was hesitating between two realms, that of the doomed and that of the saved. He appeared ready either to cleave this skull or to kiss this hand.

In a few moments he raised his left hand slowly to his forehead and took off his hat; then, letting his hand fall with the same slowness, Jean Valjean resumed his contemplations, his cap in his left hand, his club in his right, and his hair bristling on his fierce-looking head.

Under this frightful gaze the Bishop still slept in profoundest peace.

The crucifix above the mantelpiece was dimly visible in the moonlight, apparently extending its arms towards both, with a benediction for one and a pardon for the other.

Suddenly Jean Valjean put down his cap, then passed quickly, without looking at the Bishop, along the bed, straight to the cupboard which he perceived near its head; he raised the drill to force the lock; the key was in it; he opened it; the first thing he saw was the basket of silver; he took it, crossed the room with hasty stride, careless of noise, reached the door, entered the oratory, took his stick, stepped out, put the silver in his knapsack, threw away the basket, ran across the garden leaped over the wall like a tiger, and fled.

CHAPTER VI

The next day at sunrise, Monseigneur Bienvenu was walking in the garden, Madame Magloire ran towards him quite beside herself.

"Monseigneur, Monseigneur," cried she, "does your greatness know where the silver basket is?"

"Yes," said the Bishop.

"God be praised;" said she, "I did not know what had become of it."

The Bishop had just found the basket on a flower-bed. He gave it to Madame Magloire and said: "There it is."

"Yes," said she, "but there is nothing in it. The silver?"

"Ah!" said the Bishop, "it is the silver then that troubles you. I do not know where that is."

"Good heavens! it is stolen. That man who came last night stole it."

And in the twinkling of an eye, with all the agility of which her age was capable, Madame Magloire ran to the oratory, went into the alcove, and came back to the Bishop. The Bishop was bending with some sadness over a cochlearia des Guillons, which the basket had broken in falling. He looked up at Madame Magloire's cry:

"Monseigneur, the man has gone! the silver is stolen!"

The Bishop was silent for a moment, then, raising his serious eyes, he said mildly to Madame Magloire:

"Now first, did this silver belong to us?"

Madame Magloire did not answer; after a moment the Bishop continued:

"Madame Magloire, I have for a long time wrongfully withheld this silver; it belonged to the poor. Who was this man? A poor man evidently."

"Alas! alas!" returned Madame Magloire. "It is not on my account or Mademoiselle's; it is all the same to us. But it is on yours, Monseigneur. What is Monsieur going to eat from now?"

The Bishop looked at her with amazement:

"How so! have we no tin plates?"

Madame Magloire shrugged her shoulders.

"Tin smells."

"Well, then, iron plates."

Madame Magloire made an expressive gesture.

"Iron tastes."

"Well," said the Bishop, "then, wooden plates."

In a few minutes he was breakfasting at the same table at which Jean Valjean sat the night before. While breakfasting, Monseigneur Bienvenu pleasantly remarked to his sister, who said nothing, and Madame Magloire, who was grumbling to herself, that there was really no need even of a wooden spoon or fork to dip a piece of bread into a cup of milk.

"Was there ever such an idea?" said Madame Magloire to

herself, as she went backwards and forwards: "to take in a man like that, and to give him a bed beside him; and yet what a blessing it was that he did nothing but steal! Oh, my stars! it makes the chills run over me when I think of it!"

Just as the brother and sister were rising from the table there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said the Bishop.

The door opened. A strange, fierce group appeared on the threshold. Three men were holding a fourth by the collar. The three men were gendarmes; the fourth Jean Valjean.

A brigadier of gendarmes, who appeared to head the group, was near the door. He advanced towards the Bishop, giving a military salute.

"Monseigneur," said he.

At this word Jean Valjean, who was sullen and seemed entirely cast down, raised his head with a stupefied air.

"Monseigneur," he murmured, "then it is not the curé!"

"Silence!" said a gendarme, "it is Monseigneur, the Bishop."

In the meantime Monseigneur Bienvenu had approached as quickly as his great age permitted:

"Ah, there you are!" said he, looking towards Jean Valjean. "I am glad to see you. But! I gave you the candlesticks also, which are silver like the rest, and would bring two hundred francs. Why did you not take them along with your plates?"

Jean Valjean opened his eyes and looked at the Bishop with an expression which no human tongue could describe.

"Monseigneur," said the Brigadier, "then what this man said was true? We met him. He was going like a man who was running away, and we arrested him in order to see. He had this silver."

"And he told you," interrupted the Bishop, with a smile, "that it had been given him by a good old priest with whom he had passed the night. I see it all. And you brought him back here? It is all a mistake."

"If that is so," said the Brigadier, "we can let him go."

"Certainly," replied the Bishop.

The gendarmes released Jean Valjean, who shrank back.

"Is it true that they let me go?" he said, in a voice almost inarticulate, as if he were speaking in his sleep.

"Yes! you can go. Do you not understand?" said a gendarme.

"My friend," said the Bishop, "before you go away, here are your candlesticks; take them."

He went to the mantelpiece, took the two candlesticks, and

brought them to Jean Valjean. The two women beheld the action without a word, or gesture, or look that might disturb the Bishop.

Jean Valjean was trembling in every limb. He took the two candlesticks mechanically and with a mild appearance.

"Now," said the Bishop, "go in peace. By the way, my friend, when you come again, you need not come through the garden. You can always come in and go out by the front door. It is closed only with a latch, day or night."

Then, turning to the gendarmes, he said:

"Messieurs, you can retire." The gendarmes withdrew.

Jean Valjean felt like a man who is just about to faint.

The Bishop approached him, and said, in a low voice:

"Forget not, never forget that you have promised me to use this silver to become an honest man."

Jean Valjean, who had no recollection of this promise, stood confounded. The Bishop had laid much stress upon these words as he uttered them. He continued, solemnly:

"Jean Valjean, my brother: you belong no longer to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I am buying for you. I withdraw it from dark thoughts and from the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God!"

CHAPTER VII

Jean Valjean went out of the city as if he were escaping. He made all haste to get into the open country, taking the first lanes and by-paths that offered without noticing that he was every moment retracing his steps. He wandered thus all the morning. He had eaten nothing, but he felt no hunger. He was the prey of a multitude of new sensations. Unspeakable thoughts gathered in his mind the whole day.

As the sun was sinking towards the horizon, lengthening the shadow on the ground of the smallest pebble, Jean Valjean was seated behind a thicket in a large reddish plain, an absolute desert. There was no horizon but the Alps. Not even the steeple of a village church. Jean Valjean might have been three leagues from D—. A by-path which crossed the plain passed a few steps from the thicket.

In the midst of this meditation, which would have heightened not a little the frightful effect of his rags to anyone who might have met him, he heard a joyous sound.

He turned his head, and saw coming along the path a little

Savoyard, a dozen years old, singing, with his hurdy-gurdy at his side and his marmot box on his back.

Always singing, the boy stopped from time to time, and played at tossing up some pieces of money that he had in his hand, probably his whole fortune. Among them there was one forty-sous piece.

The boy stopped by the side of the thicket without seeing Jean Valjean, and tossed up his handful of sous; until this time he had skilfully caught the whole of them upon the back of his hand.

This time the forty-sous piece escaped him, and rolled towards the thicket, near Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean put his foot upon it.

The boy, however, had followed the piece with his eye, and had seen where it went.

He was not frightened, and walked straight to the man.

It was an entirely solitary place. Far as the eye could reach, there was no one on the plain or in the path. Nothing could be heard but the faint cries of a flock of birds of passage, that were flying across the sky at an immense height. The child turned his back to the sun, which made his hair like threads of gold, and flushed the savage face of Jean Valjean with a lurid glow.

"Monsieur," said the little Savoyard, with that childish confidence which is made up of ignorance and innocence, "my piece?"

"What is your name?" said Jean Valjean.

"Petit Gervais, monsieur."

"Get out," said Jean Valjean.

"My piece!" exclaimed the boy, "my white piece! my silver!"

Jean Valjean did not appear to understand. The boy took him by the collar of his blouse and shook him. And at the same time he made an effort to move the big, iron-soled shoe which was placed upon his treasure.

"I want my piece! my forty-sous piece!"

The child began to cry. Jean Valjean raised his head. He still kept his seat. His look was troubled. He looked upon the boy with an air of wonder, then reached out his hand towards his stick, and exclaimed in a terrible voice: "Who is there?"

"Me, monsieur," answered the boy. "Petit Gervais! me-me! give me my forty-sous, if you please! Take away your foot, monsieur, if you please!" Then, becoming angry, small as he was, and almost threatening:

"Come, now, will you take away your foot? • Why don't you take away your foot?"

"Ah! you are here yet!" said Jean Valjean, and rising hastily to his feet, without releasing the piece of money, he added: "You had better take care of yourself!"

The boy looked at him in terror, then began to tremble from head to foot, and after a few seconds of stupor, took to flight and ran with all his might, without daring to turn his head or utter a cry.

At a little distance, however, he stopped for want of breath, and Jean Valjean, in his reverie, heard him sobbing.

In a few minutes the boy was gone.

The sun had gone down.

The shadows were deepening around Jean Valjean. He had not eaten during the day; probably he had some fever.

He had remained standing, and had not changed his attitude since the child fled. His breathing was at long and unequal intervals. His eyes were fixed on a spot ten or twelve steps beyond him, and seemed to be studying with profound attention the form of an old piece of blue crockery that was lying in the grass. All at once he shivered; he began to feel the cold night air.

He pulled his cap down over his forehead, sought mechanically to fold and button his blouse around him, stepped forward and stooped to pick up his stick.

At that instant he perceived the forty-sous piece which his foot had half buried in the ground, and which glistened among the pebbles. It was like an electric shock. "What is that?" said he, between his teeth. He drew back a step or two, then stopped without the power to withdraw his gaze from this point which his foot had covered the instant before, as if the thing that glistened there in the obscurity had been an open eye fixed upon him.

After a few minutes, he sprang convulsively towards the piece of money, seized it, and, rising, looked away over the plain, straining his eyes towards all points of the horizon, standing and trembling like a frightened deer which is seeking a place of refuge.

He saw nothing. Night was falling, the plain was cold and bare, thick purple mists were rising in the glimmering twilight.

Jean Valjean began to run again in the direction which he had first taken.

CHAPTER VIII

The year 1817 was that which Louis XVIII., with a certain royal assumption not devoid of stateliness, styled the twenty-second year of his reign. In this year, 1817, four young Parisians played a "good farce."

These Parisians were, one from Toulouse, another from Limoges, the third from Cahors, and the fourth from Montauban; but they were students, and to say student is to say Parisian, to study in Paris is to be born in Paris.

These young men were remarkable for nothing; everybody has seen such persons; the four first-comers will serve as samples; neither good nor bad, neither learned nor ignorant, neither talented nor stupid; handsome in that charming April of life which we call twenty. They were four Oscars; for at this time, Arthurs were not yet in existence. "Burn the perfumes of Arabia in his honour," exclaims the romance. "Oscar approaches! Oscar, I am about to see him!" Ossian was in fashion, elegance was Scandinavian and Caledonian; the pure English did not prevail till later, and the first of the Arthurs, Wellington, had but just won the victory of Waterloo.

The first of these Oscars was called Félix Tholomyès, of Toulouse; the second, Listolier, of Cahors; the third, Fameuil, or Limoges; and the last, Blacheville, of Mortauban. Of course, each had his mistress. Blacheville loved Favourite so called, because she had been in England; Listolier adored Dahlia, who had taken the name of a flower as her *nom de guerre*; Fameuil idolized Zéphine, the diminutive of Josephine, and Tholomyès had Fantine, called *the Blonde* on account of her beautiful hair, the colour of the sun. Favourite, Dahlia, Zéphine, and Fantine were four enchanting girls, perfumed and sparkling, something of workwomen still, since they had not wholly given up the needle, agitated by love-affairs, yet preserving on their countenances a remnant of the serenity of labour, and in their souls that flower of purity which, in woman, survives the first fall. One of the four was called the child, because she was the youngest; and another was called the old one—the Old One was twenty-three. To conceal nothing, the three first were more experienced, more careless, and better versed in the ways of the world than Fantine, the Blond, who was still in her first illusion. She was the only one of the four who had been petted by but one.

Fantine was one of those beings which are brought forth from the heart of the people. Sprung from the most un-

fathomable depths of social darkness, she bore on her brow the mark of the anonymous and unknown. She was born at M—— on M——. Who were her parents? None could tell, she had never known either father or mother. She was called Fantine—why so? because she had never been known by any other name. Nobody knew anything more of her. Such was the manner in which this human being had come into life. At the age of ten, Fantine left the city, and went to service among the farmers of the suburbs. At fifteen she came to Paris, to “seek her fortune.” Fantine was beautiful, and remained pure as long as she could. She was a pretty blonde with fine teeth. She had gold and pearls for her dowry; but the gold was on her head and the pearls in her mouth.

She worked to live; then, also to live, for the heart, too, has its hunger, she loved.

She loved Tholomyès.

To him, it was an amour; to her, a passion. The streets of the Latin Quarter, which swarm with students and grisettes, saw the beginning of this dream. Fantine, in those labyrinths of the hill of the Pantheon, where so many ties are knotted and unloosed, long fled from Tholomyès, but in such a way as always to meet him again. There is a way of avoiding a person which resembles a search. In short, the eclogue took place.

One day, Tholomyès took the other three aside, and said to them with an oracular gesture:

“For nearly a year, Fantine, Dahlia, Zéphine and Favourite have been asking us to give them a surprise; we have solemnly promised them one. They are constantly reminding us of it, me especially. Just as the old women at Naples cry to Saint January, ‘Faccia gialluta, fa o miracolo’—‘yellow face, do your miracle,’ our pretty ones are always saying: ‘Tholomyès, when are you going to be delivered of your surprise?’ At the same time our parents are writing to us. Two birds with one stone. It seems to me the time has come. Let us talk it over.”

Upon this, Tholomyès lowered his voice, and mysteriously articulated something so ludicrous that a prolonged and enthusiastic giggling arose from the four throats at once, and Blacheville exclaimed: “What an idea!”

An alc-house, filled with smoke, was before them; they entered, and the rest of their conference was lost in its shade.

The result of this mystery was a brilliant pleasure party, which took place on the following Sunday, the four young men inviting the four young girls.

The four couples scrupulously accomplished all the country follies then possible. It was in the beginning of the holidays.

and a warm, clear summer's day. The young girls rattled and chattered like uncaged warblers. They were delirious with joy. Now and then they would playfully box the ears of the young men. Intoxication of the morning of life! Adorable years! The wing of the dragon-fly trembles! Oh, ye whoever you may be, have you memories of the past? Have you walked in the brushwood, thrusting aside the branches for the charming head behind you? Have you glided laughingly down some slope wet with rain, with the woman of your love, who held you back by the hand, exclaiming: "Oh, my new boots! what a condition they are in!"

As to Fantine, she was joy itself. Her splendid teeth had evidently been endowed by God with one function—that of laughing. She carried in her hand rather than on her head, her little hat of sewed straw, with long, white strings. Her thick blonde tresses, inclined to wave, and easily escaping from their confinement, obliging her to fasten them continually, seemed designed for the flight of Galatea under the willows. A brilliant face, delicate profile, eyes of a deep blue, heavy eyelashes, small, arching feet, the wrists and ankles neatly encased, the white skin showing here and there the azure arborescence of the veins; a cheek small and fresh, a neck robust as that of Egean Juno, the nape firm and supple, shoulders modelled as if by Coustou, with a voluptuous dimple in the centre, just visible through the muslin; a gaiety tempered with reverie, sculptured and exquisite—such was Fantine, and you divined beneath this dress and these ribbons a statue, and in this statue a soul.

That day was sunshine from one end to the other. All nature seemed to be out on holiday. The parterres of Saint Cloud were balmy with perfumes; the breeze from the Seine gently waved the leaves; the boughs were gesticulating in the wind; the bees were pillaging the jessamine; a whole crew of butterflies had settled in the milfoil, clover and wild oats. The august park of the King of France was invaded by a swarm of vagabonds, the birds.

The four joyous couples shone resplendently in concert with the sunshine, the flowers, the fields and the trees.

After breakfast, the four couples went to see, in what was then called the king's square, a plant newly arrived from the Indies, the name of which escapes us at present, and which at this time was attracting all Paris to Saint Cloud: it was a strange and beautiful shrub with a long stalk, the innumerable branches of which, fine as threads, tangled, and leafless, were covered with millions of little white blossoms, which

gave it the appearance of flowing hair, powdered with flowers. There was always a crowd admiring it.

When they had viewed the shrub, Tholomyès exclaimed, "I propose donkeys," and making a bargain with a donkey-driver, they returned through Vanvres and Issy. They left the donkeys for a new pleasure, crossed the Seine in a boat, and walked from Bassy to the Barrière de l'Etoile. They had been on their feet, it will be remembered, since five in the morning, but, bah! there is no weariness on Sunday, said Favourite, on Sunday fatigue has a holiday. Towards three o'clock, the four couples, wild with happiness, were running down to the Russian mountains, a singular edifice which then occupied the heights of Beaujon, and the serpentine line of which might have been perceived above the trees of the Champs Elysées.

From time to time Favourite exclaimed:

"But the surprise? I want the surprise."

"Be patient," answered Tholomyès.

The Russian mountains exhausted, they thought of dinner, and the happy eight, a little weary at last, stranded on Bombarda's, a branch establishment, set up in the Champs Elysées by the celebrated restaurateur, Bombarda, whose sign was then seen on the Rue de Rivoli, near the Delorme arcade.

A large but plain apartment, with an alcove containing a bed at the bottom (the place was so full on Sunday that it was necessary to take up this with lodging-room); two windows from which they could see, through the elms, the quai and the river; a magnificent August sunbeam glancing over the windows: two tables; one loaded with a triumphant mountain of bouquets, interspersed with hats and bonnets, while at the other, the four couples were gathered round a joyous pile of plates, napkins, glasses and bottles; jugs of beer and flasks of wine; little order on the table, and some disorder under it.

Table talk and lovers' talk equally elude the grasp: lovers' talk is clouds, table talk is smoke.

Fameuil and Dahlia hummed airs; Tholomyès drank, Zéphine laughed, Fantine smiled. Listolier blew a wooden trumpet that he had bought at Saint Cloud. Favourite looked tenderly at Blacheville, and said:

"Blacheville, I adore you."

At this moment, Favourite, crossing her arms and turning round her head, looked fixedly at Tholomyès and said:

"Come! the surprise?"

"Precisely. The moment has come," replied Tholomyès.

"Gentlemen, the hour has come for surprising these ladies. Ladies, wait for us a moment."

"It begins with a kiss," said Blacheville.

"On the forehead," added Tholomyès.

Each one gravely placed a kiss on the forehead of his mistress; after which they directed their steps towards the door, all four in file, laying their fingers on their lips.

Favourite clapped her hands as they went out.

"It is amusing already," said she.

"Do not be too long," murmured Fantine. "We are waiting for you."

The girls, left alone, leaned their elbows on the window-sills in couples, and chattered together, bending their heads and speaking from one window to the other.

They saw the young men go out of Bombarda's, arm in arm; they turned round, made signals to them laughingly, then disappeared in the dusty Sunday crowd which takes possession of the Champs-Élysées once a week.

"Do not be long!" cried Fantine.

"What are they going to bring us?" said Zéphine.

"Surely something pretty," said Dahlia.

"I hope it will be gold," resumed Favourite.

They were soon distracted by the stir on the water's edge, which they distinguished through the branches of the tall trees, and which diverted them greatly. It was the hour for the departure of the mails and diligences. Almost all the stage-coaches to the south and west passed at that time by the Champs-Élysées. The greater part followed the quai and went out through the Barrière Passy. Every minute some huge vehicle, painted yellow and black, heavily loaded, noisily harnessed, distorted with mails, awnings and valises, full of heads that were constantly disappearing, grinding the curb-stones, turning the pavements into flints, rushed through the crowd, throwing out sparks like a forge, with dust for smoke, and an air of fury. This hubbub delighted the young girls. Favourite exclaimed:

"What an uproar! one would say that heaps of chains were taking flight."

It so happened that one of these vehicles which could be distinguished with difficulty through the obscurity of the elms, stopped for a moment, then set out again on a gallop. This surprised Fantine.

"It is strange," said she. "I thought the diligences never stopped."

Favourite shrugged her shoulders:

"This Fantine is surprising; I look at her with curiosity.

She wonders at the most simple things. Suppose that I am a traveller, and say to the diligence: 'I am going on; you can take me up on the quai in passing.' The diligence passes, sees me, stops and takes me up. This happens every day. You know nothing of life, my dear."

Some time passed in this manner. Suddenly Favourite started as if from sleep.

"Well!" said she, "and the surprise?"

"Yes," returned Dahlia, "the famous surprise."

"They are very long!" said Fantine.

As Fantine finished the sigh, the boy who had waited at dinner entered. He had in his hand something that looked like a letter.

"What is that?" asked Favourite.

"It is the paper the gentlemen left for these ladies," he replied.

"Why did you not bring it at once?"

"Because the gentlemen ordered me not to give it to the ladies before an hour," returned the boy.

Favourite snatched the paper from his hands. It was really a letter.

"Stop!" said she. "There is no address; but see what is written on it:

'THIS IS THE SURPRISE.'

She hastily unsealed the letter, opened it, and read (she knew how to read):

"Oh, our lovers!

"Know that we have parents. Parents—you scarcely know the meaning of the word, they are what are called fathers and mothers in the civil code, simple but honest. Now these parents bemoan us, these old men claim us, these good men and women call us prodigal sons, desire our return, and offer to kill for us the fatted calf. We obey them, being virtuous. At the moment when you read this, four mettlesome horses will be bearing us back to our papas and mammas. The Toulouse diligence snatches us from the abyss, our beautiful darlings! We are returning to society, to duty and order, on a full trot, at the rate of three leagues an hour. It is necessary to the country that we become, like everybody else, prefects, fathers of families, rural guards, and councillors of state. Venerate us. We sacrifice ourselves. Mourn for us rapidly, and replace us speedily. If this letter reaches you, read it in turn. Adieu.

"For nearly two years we have made you happy. Bear us no ill-will for it.

*"Signed: BLACHEVILLE,
FAMEUIL,
LISTOLIER,
FELIX THOLOMYES.*

"P.S. The dinner is paid for."

The four girls gazed at each other.

Favourite was the first to break the silence.

"Well!" said she, "it is a good farce all the same."

"It is very droll," said Zéphine.

"It must have been Blacheville that had the idea," resumed Favourite. "This makes me in love with him. Soon loved, soon gone. That is the story."

"No," said Dahlia, "it is an idea of Tholomyès. This is clear."

"In that case," returned Favourite, "down with Blacheville, and long live Tholomyès!"

"Long live Tholomyès!" cried Dahlia and Zéphine.

And they burst into laughter.

Fantine laughed like the rest.

An hour afterwards, when she had re-entered her chamber, she wept. It was her first love, as we have said; she had given herself to this Tholomyès as to a husband, and the poor girl had a child.

CHAPTER IX

There was, during the first quarter of the present century, at Montfermeil, near Paris, a sort of chop-house: it is not there now. It was kept by a man and his wife, named Thenardier, and was situated in the lane Boulanger. Above the door, nailed flat against the wall, was a board, upon which something was painted that looked like a man carrying on his back another man wearing the heavy epaulettes of a general, gilt and with large silver stars; red blotches typified blood; the remainder of the picture was smoke, and probably represented a battle. Beneath was this inscription: TO THE SERGEANT OF WATERLOO.

Nothing is commoner than a cart or waggon before the door of an inn; nevertheless the vehicle, or, more properly speaking, the fragment of a vehicle which obstructed the street

in front of the Sergeant of Waterloo one evening in the spring of 1818, certainly would have attracted by its bulk the attention of any painter who might have been passing.

Under the axle-tree hung festooned a huge chain fit for a Goliath of the galleys. The middle of the chain was hanging quite near the ground, under the axle; and upon the bend, as on a swinging rope, two little girls were seated that evening in exquisite grouping, the smaller, eighteen months old, in the lap of the larger, who was two years and a half old.

A handkerchief carefully knotted kept them from falling. A mother, looking down upon this frightful chain, had said: "Ah! there is a plaything for my children!"

The mother, a woman whose appearance was rather forbidding, but touching at this moment, was seated on the sill of the inn, swinging the two children by a long string, while she brooded them with her eyes for fear of accident with that animal but heavenly expression peculiar to maternity. At each vibration the hideous links uttered a creaking noise like an angry cry; the little ones were in ecstasies, the setting sun mingled in the joy, and nothing could be more charming than this caprice of chance which made of a Titan's chain a swing for cherubim.

While rocking the babes the mother sang with a voice out of tune a then popular song:

"Il le faut, disait un guerrier"

Her song and watching her children prevented her hearing and seeing what was passing in the street.

Someone, however, had approached her as she was beginning the first couplet of the song, and suddenly she heard a voice say quite near her ear:

"You have two pretty children there, Madame."

"A la belle et tendre Imogine,"

answered the mother, continuing her song; then she turned her head.

A woman was before her at a little distance; she also had a child, which she bore in her arms.

She was carrying in addition a large carpet-bag, which seemed heavy.

This woman's child was one of the divinest beings that can be imagined, a little girl of two or three years. She was sleeping in the absolutely confiding slumber peculiar to her age. Mothers' arms were made of tenderness, and sweet sleep blesses the child who lies therein.

As to the mother, she seemed poor and sad: she had the

appearance of a working woman who is seeking to return to the life of a peasant. Her hands were tanned and spotted with freckles, the forefinger hardened and pricked with the needle; she wore a coarse brown delaine mantle, a calico dress, and large heavy shoes. It was Fantine.

Yes, Fantine. Hard to recognise, yet, on looking attentively, you saw that she still retained her beauty. A sad line, such as is formed by irony, had marked her right cheek. As to her toilette—that airy toilette of muslin and ribbons which seemed as if made of gaiety, folly, and music, full of baubles, and perfumed with lilacs—that had vanished like the beautiful sparkling hoar-frost, which we take for diamonds in the sun; they melt, and leave the branch dreary and black.

Ten months had slipped away since “the good farce.”

What had passed during these ten months? We can guess.

After recklessness, trouble. Fantine had lost sight of Favourite, Zéphine and Dahlia; the tie broken on the part of the men was unloosed on the part of the women; they would have been astonished if anyone had said a fortnight afterwards they were friends; they had no longer cause to be so. Fantine was left alone. The father of her child gone—alas! such partings are irrevocable—she found herself absolutely isolated, with the habit of labour lost, and the taste for pleasure acquired. Led by her liaison with Tholomyès to disdain the small business that she knew how to do, she had neglected her opportunities, they were all gone. She had a vague feeling that she was on the eve of falling into distress, of slipping into the street. She must have courage; she had it, and bore up bravely. The idea occurred to her of returning to her native village M— sur M—, there perhaps someone would know her, and give her work. She sold all she had, which gave her two hundred francs; when her little debts were paid, she had but eighty left. At twenty-two years of age, on a fine spring morning, she left Paris, carrying her child on her back. He who had seen the two passing must have pitied them. The woman had nothing in the world but this child, and this child had nothing in the world but this woman. Fantine had nursed her child; that had weakened her chest somewhat and she coughed slightly.

Towards noon, after having, for the sake of rest, travelled from time to time at a cost of three or four cents a league, in what they called then the Petites Boitures of the environs of Paris, Fantine reached Montfermeil, and stood in Boulanger lane.

As she was passing by the Thenardier chop-house, the two little children sitting in delight on their monstrous swing had

a sort of dazzling effect upon her, and she paused before this joyous vision.

There are charms. These two little girls were one for this mother.

She beheld them with emotion. The presence of angels is a herald of paradise. She thought she saw above this inn the mysterious "HERE" of Providence. These children were evidently happy; she gazed upon them, she admired them, so much affected that at the moment when the mother was taking breath between the verses of her song, she could not help saying what we have been reading.

"You have two pretty children there, Madame."

The most ferocious animals are disarmed by caresses to their young.

The mother raised her head and thanked her, and made the stranger sit down on the stone step, she herself being on the doorsill: the two women began to talk together.

"My name is Madame Thenardier," said the mother of the two girls: "we keep this inn."

This Madame Thenardier was a red-haired, brawny, angular woman, of the soldier's wife type in all its horror; and, singularly enough, she had a lolling air which she had gained from novel-reading. She was a masculine lackadaisicalness. Old romances impressed on the imagination of mistresses of chop-houses have such effects. She was still young, scarcely thirty years old. If this woman, who was seated stooping, had been upright, perhaps her towering form and her broad shoulders, those of a movable colossus, fit for a market woman, would have dismayed the traveller, disturbed her confidence, and prevented what we have to relate. A person seated instead of standing; fate hangs on such a thread as that.

The traveller told her story, a little modified.

She said she was a working woman, and her husband was dead. Not being able to procure work in Paris she was going in search of it elsewhere; in her own province; that she had left Paris that morning on foot; that carrying her child she had become tired, and meeting the Villemoble stage had got it; that from Villemoble she had come on foot to Montfermeil; that the child had walked a little, but not much, she was so young; that she was compelled to carry her, and the jewel had fallen asleep.

And at these words she gave her daughter a passionate kiss, which awakened her. The child opened its large blue eyes, like its mother's, and saw—what? Nothing, everything, with that serious and sometimes severe air of little children, which is one of the mysteries of their shining innocence before our

shadowy virtues. One would say that they felt themselves to be angels, and knew us to be human. Then the child began to laugh, and, although the mother restrained her, slipped to the ground, with the indomitable energy of a little one that wants to run about. All at once she perceived the two others in their swing, stopped short, and put out her tongue in token of admiration.

Mother Thenardier untied the children and took them from the swing, saying:

"Play together, all three of you."

At that age acquaintance is easy, and in a moment the little Thenardiers were playing with the newcomer, making holes in the ground to their intense delight.

The two women continued to chat.

"What do you call your brat?"

"Cosette."

For Cosette read Euphrasie. The name of the little one was Euphrasie. But the mother had made Cosette out of it, by that sweet and charming instinct of mothers and of the people, who change Josefa into Pepita, and Françoise into Sillette. That is a kind of derivation which deranges and disconcerts all the science of etymologists. We knew a grandmother who succeeded in making from Theodore, Gnon.

"How old is she?"

"She is going on three years."

"The age of my eldest."

The three girls were grouped in an attitude of deep anxiety and bliss; a great event had occurred; a large worm had come out of the ground; they were afraid of it, and yet in ecstasies over it.

Their bright foreheads touched each other; three heads in one halo of glory.

"Children," exclaimed the Thenardier mother; "how soon they know one another. See them! One would swear they were three sisters."

These words were the spark which the other woman was probably awaiting. She seized the hand of Madame Thenardier and said:

"Will you keep my child for me?"

Madame Thenardier made a motion of surprise, which was neither consent nor refusal.

Cosette's mother continued:

"You see, I cannot take my child into the country. Work forbids it. With a child I could not find a place there; they are so absurd in that district. It is God who has led me before your inn. The sight of your little ones so pretty and

clean, and happy, has overwhelmed me. I said: there is a good mother; they will be like three sisters, and then it will not be long before I come back. Will you keep my child for me?"

"I must think over it," said Thenardier.

"I will give you six francs a month."

Here a man's voice was heard from within:

"Not less than seven francs, and six months paid in advance."

"Six times seven are forty-two," said Thenardier.

"I will give it," said the mother.

"And fifteen francs extra for the first expenses," added the man.

"I will give it," said the mother; "I have eighty francs. That will leave me enough to go into the country if I walk. I will earn some money there, and as soon as I have I will come for my little love."

The man's voice returned:

"Has the child a wardrobe?"

"That is my husband," said Madame Thenardier.

"Certainly she has, the poor darling. I knew it was your husband. And a fine wardrobe it is too, an extravagant wardrobe, everything in dozens, and silk dresses like a lady. They are here in my carpet-bag."

"You must leave that here," put in the man's voice.

"Of course I shall give it to you," said the mother; "it would be strange if I should leave my child naked."

The face of the master appeared.

"It is all right," said he.

The bargain was concluded. The mother passed the night at the inn, gave her money and left her child, fastened again her carpet-bag, diminished by her child's wardrobe, and very light now, and set off next morning, expecting soon to return. These partings are arranged tranquilly, but they are full of despair.

A neighbour of the Thenardiers met the mother on her way, and came in, saying:

"I have just met a woman in the street who was crying as if her heart would break."

When Cosette's mother had gone, the man said to his wife:

"That will do for my note of one hundred and ten francs which falls due to-morrow, I was fifty francs short. Do you know I should have had a sheriff and a protest? You have proved a good mouse-trap with your little ones."

"Without knowing it," said the woman.

Thanks to Fantine's fifty-seven francs, Thenardier had been

able to avoid a protest and to honour his signature. The next month they were still in need of money, and the woman carried Cosette's wardrobe to Paris and pawned it for sixty francs. When this sum was spent, the Thenardiers began to look upon the little girl as a child which they sheltered for charity, and treated her as such. Her clothes being gone, they dressed her in the cast-off garments of the little Thenardiers, that is, in rags. They fed her on the odds and ends, a little better than the dog, and a little worse than the cat. The dog and the cat were her messmates, Cosette ate with them under the table in a wooden dish like theirs.

Her mother, as we shall see hereafter, who had found a place at M—— sur M——, wrote, or rather had some one write for her, every month, inquiring for news of her child. The Thenardiers replied invariably:

"Cosette is doing wonderfully well."

A year passed and then another.

People used to say in the village:

"What good people these Thenardiers are! They are not rich, and yet they bring up a poor child that has been left with them."

They thought Cosette was forgotten by her mother.

Meantime Thenardier, having learned in some obscure way that the child was probably illegitimate, and that its mother could not acknowledge it, demanded fifteen francs a month, saying "that the 'creature' was growing and eating," and threatening to send her away. "She won't humbug me," he exclaimed; "I will confound her with the brat in the midst of her concealment. I must have more money." The mother paid the fifteen francs.

From year to year the child grew, and her misery also.

So long as Cosette was very small, she was the scapegoat of the two other children; as soon as she began to grow a little, that is to say, before she was five years old, she became the servant of the house. The Thenardiers felt doubly authorised to treat her thus, as the mother, who still remained at M—— sur M——, began to be remiss in her payments. Some months remained due.

Had this mother returned to Montfermeil at the end of these three years she would not have known her child. Cosette, so fresh and pretty when she came to that house, was now thin and wan.

In the place she was called the Lark. People like figurative names, and were pleased thus to name this little being, not larger than a bird, trembling, frightened and shivering, awake

every morning first of all in the house and the village, always in the street or in the fields before dawn.

Only the poor lark never sang.

CHAPTER X

What had become of this mother in the meanwhile, who, according to the people of Montfermeil, seemed to have abandoned her child? Where was she? What was she doing?

After leaving her little Cosette with the Thenardiers, she went on her way and arrived at M—— sur M——.

This, it will be remembered, was in 1818.

Fantine had left the province some twelve years before, and M—— sur M—— had greatly changed in appearance. While Fantine had been slowly sinking deeper and deeper into misery, her native village had been prosperous.

From time immemorial the special occupation of the inhabitants of M—— sur M—— had been the imitation of English jets and German black glass trinkets. The business had always been dull in consequence of the high price of the raw material, which reacted upon the manufacture. At the time of Fantine's return to M—— sur M—— an entire transformation had been effected in the production of these "black goods." Towards the end of the year 1815, an unknown man had established himself in the city, and had conceived the idea of substituting gum-lac for resin in the manufacture; and, for bracelets in particular, he made the clasps by simply bending the ends of the metal together instead of soldering them.

On his arrival at M—— sur M—— he had the dress, the manners and the language of a labourer only.

It seemed that the very day on which he thus obscurely entered the little city of M—— sur M——, just at dusk on a December evening, with his bundle on his back, and a thorn stick in his hand, a great fire had broken out in the town-house. This man rushed into the fire and saved, at the peril of his life, two children, who proved to be those of the captain of the gendarmerie, and in the hurry and gratitude of the moment no one thought to ask him for his passport. He was known from that time by the name of Father Madeleine.

He was a man about fifty, who always appeared to be pre-occupied in mind and who was good-natured; this was all that could be said about him.

Thanks to the rapid progress of this manufacture, to which

he had given such wonderful life, M— sur M— had become a considerable centre of business. The profits of Father Madeleine were so great that by the end of the second year he was able to build a large factory, in which there were two immense workshops, one for men and the other for women: whoever was needy could go there and be sure of finding work and wages. Father Madeleine required the men to be willing, the women to be of good morals, and all to be honest. An active circulation kindled everything and penetrated everywhere. Idleness and misery were unknown. There was no pocket so obscure that it did not contain some money, and no dwelling so poor that was not the abode of some joy.

As we have said in the midst of this activity, of which he was the cause and the pivot, Father Madeleine had made his fortune, but, very strangely for a mere man of business, that it did not appear to be his principal care. It seemed that he thought much for others and little for himself. In 1820, it was known that he had six hundred and thirty thousand francs standing to his credit in the banking-house of Laffitte: but before setting aside this six hundred and thirty thousand francs for himself, he had expended more than a million for the city and the poor.

At length, in 1819, it was reported in the city one morning, that upon the recommendation of the prefect, and in consideration of the services he had rendered to the country, Father Madeleine had been appointed by the King, Mayor of M— sur M—. Those who had pronounced the newcomer "an ambitious man", eagerly seized this opportunity, which all men desire, to exclaim:

"There! what did I tell you?"

M— sur M— was filled with the rumour, and the report proved to be well founded, for, a few days afterwards, the nomination appeared in the *Moniteur*. The next day Father Madeleine declined.

In 1820, five years after his arrival at M— sur M—, the services that he had rendered to the region were so brilliant and the wish of the whole population was so unanimous, that the King again appointed him mayor of the city. He refused again; but the prefect resisted his determination, the principal citizens came and urged him to accept, and the people in the streets begged him to do so; all insisted so strongly that at last he yielded. It was remarked that what appeared most of all to bring him to this determination, was the almost angry exclamation of an old woman belonging to the poorer class, who cried out to him from her door-stone, with some temper:

"A good mayor is a good thing. Are you afraid of the good you can do?"

Some pretended that he was a mysterious personage, and declared that no one ever went into his room, which was a true anchorite's cell, furnished with hour-glasses, and enlivened with death's-heads and cross-bones. So much was said of this kind that some of the more mischievous of the elegant young ladies of M— sur M— called on him one day and said: "Monsieur Mayor, will you show us your room? We have heard that it is a 'grotto'." He smiled, and introduced them on the spot to this "grotto". They were well punished for their curiosity. It was a room very well fitted up with mahogany furniture, ugly as all furniture of that kind is, and the walls covered with shilling paper. They could see nothing but two candlesticks of antique form that stood on the mantelpiece, and appeared to be silver, "for they were marked," a remark full of the spirit of these little towns.

Near the beginning of the year 1821, the journals announced the decease of Monsieur Myriel, Bishop of D—, "surnamed *Monsieur Bienvenu*," who died in the odour of sanctity at the age of eighty-two years.

The announcement of his death was reproduced in the local paper of M— sur M—. Monsieur Madeleine appeared next morning dressed in black with crape on his hat.

This mourning was noticed and talked about all over the town. It appeared to throw some light upon the origin of Monsieur Madeleine. The conclusion was that he was in some way related to the venerable Bishop. "He wears black for the Bishop of D—," was the talk of the drawing-room. One evening, one of the dowagers of that little great world, curious by right of age, ventured to ask him: "The Mayor is doubtless a relative of the late Bishop of D—?"

He said: "No, Madame."

"But," the dowager persisted, "you wear mourning for him?"

He answered: "In my youth I was a servant in his family."

It was also remarked that whenever there passed through the city a young Savoyard, who was tramping about the country in search of chimneys to sweep, the Mayor would send for him, ask his name and give him money. The little Savoyards told each other, and many of them passed that way.

At first there had been, as always happens with those who rise by their own efforts, slanders and calumnies against Monsieur Madeleine. Soon this was reduced to satire; then it was only wit; then it vanished entirely. People came from thirty

miles around to consult Monsieur Madeleine. He settled differences; he prevented lawsuits; he reconciled enemies. Everybody, of his own will, chose him for judge. He seemed to have the book of the natural law by heart. A contagion of veneration had, in the course of six or seven years, step by step, spread over the whole country.

One man alone, in the city and its neighbourhood, held himself entirely clear from this contagion, and, whatever Father Madeleine did, he remained indifferent, as if a sort of instinct, unchangeable and imperturbable, kept him awake and on the watch. Often, when Monsieur Madeleine passed along the street, calm, affectionate, followed by the benedictions of all, it happened that a tall man, wearing a flat hat and an iron-grey coat, and armed with a stout cane, would turn around, behind him, and follow him with his eyes until he disappeared, crossing his arms, slowly shaking his head, and pushing his upper with his under lip up to his nose, a sort of significant grimace which might be rendered by: "But what is that man? I am sure I have seen him somewhere. At all events, I at least am not his dupe."

This personage, grave with an almost threatening gravity, was one of those who, even in a hurried interview, command the attention of the observer.

His name was Javert, and he was one of the police.

He exercised at M—— sur M—— the unpleasant, but useful function of Inspector. He was not there at the date of Madeleine's arrival. Javert owed his position to the protection of Monsieur Chabouillet, the secretary of the Minister of State, Count Angles, then Prefect of Police at Paris. When Javert arrived at M—— sur M—— the fortune of the great manufacturer had been made already, and Father Madeleine had become Monsieur Madeleine.

Certain police officers have a peculiar physiognomy in which can be traced an air of meanness mingled with an air of authority. Javert had this physiognomy, without meanness. He was born in a prison. His mother was a fortune-teller whose husband was in the galleys. He grew up to think himself without the pale of society, and despaired of ever entering it. He noticed that society closes its doors, without pity, on two classes of men, those who attack it and those who guard it; he could choose between these two classes only. At the same time, he felt that he had an indescribable basis of rectitude, order and honesty, associated with an irrepressible hatred for that gypsy race to which he belonged. He entered the police. He succeeded. At forty he was an inspector.

In his youth he had been stationed in the galleys at the South.

The human face of Javert consisted of a snub nose, with two deep nostrils, which were bordered by large bushy whiskers that covered both his cheeks. One felt ill at ease the first time he saw those two forests and those two caverns. When Javert laughed, which was rarely and terribly, his thin lips parted, and showed, not only his teeth, but his gums; and around his nose there was a wrinkle as broad and wild as the muzzle of a fallow deer.

Monsieur Madeleine was walking one morning along one of the unpaved alleys of M—— sur M——; he heard a shouting and saw a crowd at a little distance. He went to the spot. An old man, named Father Fauchelevant, had fallen under his cart, his horse being thrown down.

The horse had his thighs broken, and could not stir. The old man was caught between the wheels. Unluckily he had fallen so that the whole weight rested upon his breast. The cart was heavily loaded. Father Fauchelevant was uttering doleful groans. They had tried to pull him out but in vain. An unlucky effort, inexperienced help, a false push, might crush him. It was impossible to extricate him otherwise than by raising the waggon from beneath. Javert, who came up at the moment of the accident, had sent for a jack.

Monsieur Madeleine came. The crowd fell back with respect.

"Help," cried old Fauchelevant. "Who is a good fellow to save an old man?"

Monsieur Madeleine turned towards the bystanders:

"Has anybody a jack?"

"We sent to the nearest place, to Flachot Place, where is a blacksmith; but it will take a good quarter of an hour, at least."

"A quarter of an hour!" exclaimed Madeleine.

It had rained the night before, the road was soft, the cart was sinking deeper every moment, and pressing more and more on the breast of the old carman. It was evident that in less than five minutes his ribs would be crushed.

"Listen," resumed Madeleine, "there is room enough still under the wagon for a man to crawl and lift it with his back. In half a minute we will have the poor man out. Is there nobody here who has the strength and courage? Five louis-d'ors for him!"

Nobody stirred in the crowd.

"It is not willingness which they lack," said a voice.

Monsieur Madeleine turned and saw Javert. He had not noticed him when he came.

Javert continued:

"It is strength. He must be a terrible man who can raise a waggon like that on his back."

Then, looking fixedly at Monsieur Madeleine he went on, emphasising every word that he uttered:

"Monsieur Madeleine, I have known but one man capable of doing what you call for."

Madeleine shuddered.

Javert added, with an air of indifference, but without taking his eyes from Madeleine:

"He was a convict."

"Ah!" said Madeleine.

"In the galleys at Toulon."

Madeleine raised his head, met the falcon eye of Javert still fixed upon him, looked at the immovable peasants, and smiled sadly. Then, without saying a word, he fell on his knees, and even before the crowd had time to utter a cry, he was under the cart.

There was an awful moment of suspense and of silence.

Madeleine, lying almost flat under the fearful weight, was twice seen to try in vain to bring his elbows and knees nearer together. They cried out to him: "Father Madeleine! come out from there!" Old Fauchelevent himself said: "Monsieur Madeleine! go away! I must die, you see that; leave me; you will be crushed too." Madeleine made no answer.

The bystanders held their breath. The wheels were still sinking, and it had now become almost impossible for Madeleine to extricate himself.

All at once the enormous mass started, the cart rose slowly, the wheels came half out of the ruts. A smothered voice was heard, crying: "Quick! help!" It was Madeleine, who had just made a final effort.

They all rushed to the work. The devotion of one man had given strength and courage to all. The cart was lifted by twenty arms. Old Fauchelevent was safe.

Madeleine arose. He was very pale, though dripping with sweat. His clothes were torn and covered with mud. All wept. The old man kissed his knees and called him the good God. He himself wore on his face an indescribable expression of joyous and celestial suffering, and he looked with tranquil eye upon Javert, who was still watching him. Fauchelevent had broken his knee-pan in his fall. Father Madeleine had him carried to an infirmary that he had estab-

lished for his workmen in the same building with his factory, which was attended now by Sisters of Charity. The next morning the old man found a thousand-franc bill upon the stand by the side of the bed, with this note in the handwriting of Father Madeleine: "I have purchased your horse and cart." The cart was broken and the horse was dead. Fauchelevent got well, but he had a stiff knee. Monsieur Madeleine, through the recommendations of the sisters and the curé, got the old man a place as gardener at a convent in the Quartier Saint Antoine at Paris.

Such was the situation when Fantine returned. No one remembered her. Luckily the door of M. Madeleine's factory was like the face of a friend. She presented herself there, and was admitted into the workshop for women. The business was entirely new to Fantine, she could not be very expert in it, and consequently did not receive much for her day's work; but that little was enough, the problem was solved; she was earning her living.

At first, as we have seen, she paid the Thenardiers punctually. As she only knew how to sign her name she was obliged to write through a public letter-writer.

She wrote often; that was noticed. They began to whisper in the women's workshop that Fantine "wrote letters", and that "she had airs". Some people are malicious from the mere necessity of talking. Their conversation, tattling in the drawing-room, gossip in the antechamber, is like those fire-places that use up wood rapidly; they need a great deal of fuel; the fuel is their neighbour.

So Fantine was watched.

Beyond this, more than one was jealous of her fair hair and of her white teeth.

It was ascertained that she wrote at least twice a month, and always to the same address, and that she prepaid the postage. They succeeded in learning the address: "Monsieur Thenardier, innkeeper, Montfermeil." The public letter-writer, a simple old fellow, who could not fill his stomach with red wine without emptying his pocket of his secrets, was made to reveal this at a drinking-house. In short, it became known that Fantine had a child. "She must be that sort of a woman." And there was one old gossip who went to Montfermeil, talked with the Thenardiers, and said on her return: "For my thirty-five francs I have found out all about it. I have seen the child!"

The busybody who did this was a beldame called Madame Victurnien, keeper and guardian of everybody's virtue. Madame Victurnien was fifty-six years old, and wore a mask

of old age over her mask of ugliness. This Madame Victournien then went to Montfermeil, and returned saying: "I have seen the child."

All this time Fantine had been more than a year at the factory when one morning the overseer of the workshop handed her, on behalf of the Mayor, fifty francs, saying that she was no longer wanted in the shop, and enjoining her, on behalf of the Mayor, to leave the city.

This was the very same month in which the Thenardiers, after having asked twelve francs instead of six, had demanded fifteen francs instead of twelve.

Fantine was thunderstruck. She could not leave the city; she was in debt for her lodging and her furniture. Fifty francs was not enough to clear off that debt. She faltered out some suppliant words. The overseer gave her to understand that she must leave the shop instantly. Fantine was, moreover, only a moderate worker. Overwhelmed with shame even more than with despair, she left the shop and returned to her room. Her fault, then, was now known to all!

She felt no strength to say a word. She was advised to see the Mayor; she dared not. The Mayor gave her fifty francs because he was kind, and sent her away because he was just. She bowed to that decree.

She began to make coarse shirts for the soldiers of the garrison, and earned twelve sous a day. Her daughter cost her ten. It was at this time that she began to get behindhand with the Thenardiers.

Excessive work fatigued Fantine, and the slight dry cough that she had, increased. She sometimes said to her neighbour, Marguerite, "Just feel how hot my hands are."

In the morning, however, when, with an old broken comb, she combed her fine hair, which flowed down in silky waves, she enjoyed a moment of happiness.

She had been discharged towards the end of the winter; summer passed away, but winter returned. Short days, less work. The Thenardiers, being poorly paid, were constantly writing letters to her, the contents of which disheartened her, while the postage was ruining her. One day they wrote to her that little Cosette was entirely destitute of clothing for the cold weather, that she needed a woollen skirt, and that her mother must send at least ten francs for that. She received the letter, and crushed it in her hand for a whole day. In the evening she went into a barber's shop at the corner of the street, and pulled out her comb. Her beautiful fair hair fell below her waist.

"What beautiful hair!" exclaimed the barber.

"How much will you give me for it?" said she.

"Ten francs."

"Cut it off."

She bought a knit skirt and sent it to the Thenardiers.

This skirt made the Thenardiers furious. It was the money that they wanted. They gave the skirt to Eponine, one of their children. The poor Lark still shivered.

Fantine thought: "My child is no longer cold; I have clothed her with my hair."

She put on a little round cap, which concealed her shorn head, and with that she was still pretty.

A gloomy work was going on in Fantine's heart.

The lower she sank, the more all became gloomy around her, the more the sweet little angel shone out in the bottom of her heart. She would say: "When I am rich, I shall have my Cosette with me," and she laughed.

One day she received from the Thenardiers a letter in these words: "Cosette is sick of an epidemic disease—a military fever they call it. The drugs necessary are dear. It is ruining us, and we can no longer pay for them. Unless you send us forty francs within a week the little one will die."

Then she went downstairs and out of doors, running and jumping, still laughing. As she passed through the Square, she saw many people gathered about an odd-looking carriage, on the top of which stood a man in red clothes, declaiming. He was a juggler and a travelling dentist, and was offering to the public complete sets of teeth, opiates, powders and elixirs.

Fantine joined the crowd and began to laugh with the rest at this harangue, in which were mingled slang for the rabble and jargon for the better sort. The puller of teeth saw this beautiful girl laughing, and suddenly called out: "You have pretty teeth, you girl who are laughing there. If you will sell me your two incisors, I will give you a gold Napoleon for each of them."

"What is that? What are my incisors?" asked Fantine.

"The incisors," resumed the professor of dentistry, "are the front teeth, the two upper ones."

"How horrible!" cried Fantine.

"Two Napoleons!" grumbled a toothless old hag, who stood by. "How lucky she is!"

Fantine fled away and stopped her ears not to hear the shrill voice of the man, who called after her: "Consider, my beauty! Two Napoleons! How much good will they do you! If you have the courage for it, come this evening to the inn of the *Tillac d'Argent*; you will find me there."

Fantine returned home. She was raving, and told the story to her good neighbour, Marguerite: "Do you understand that? Isn't he an abominable man; why do they let such people go about the country? Pull out my two front teeth—why, I should be horrible! The hair is bad enough; but the teeth—oh! what a monster of a man! I would rather throw myself from the fifth storey, head first, to the pavement. He told me that he would be this evening at the *Tillac d'Argent*."

"And what was it he offered you?" asked Marguerite.

"Two Napoleons."

"That is forty francs."

"Yes," said Fantine; "that makes forty francs."

She became thoughtful and went about her work. In the evening she went out, and took the direction of the Rue de Paris where the inns are.

The next morning, when Marguerite went into Fantine's chamber before daybreak—for they always worked together, and so made one candle do for the two—she found Fantine seated upon her couch, pale and icy. She had not been in bed. Her cap had fallen upon her knees. The candle had burned all night, and was almost consumed.

Marguerite stopped upon the threshold, petrified by this wild disorder, and exclaimed: "Good Lord! the candle is all burned out. Something has happened."

Then she looked at Fantine, who sadly turned her shorn head.

Fantine had grown ten years older since evening.

"Bless us!" said Marguerite, "what is the matter with you, Fantine?"

"Nothing," said Fantine. "Quite the contrary. My child will not die with that frightful sickness for lack of aid. I am satisfied."

At the same time she smiled. The candle lit up her face. It was a sickening smile, for the corners of her mouth were stained with blood, and a dark cavity revealed itself there.

The two teeth were gone.

And this was a ruse of the Thenardiens to get money. Cosette was not sick.

Fantine threw her looking-glass out of the window. She passed whole nights in weeping and thinking. She had a strange brilliancy in her eyes, and a constant pain in her shoulder, near the top of her left shoulder-blade. She coughed a great deal. She hated Father Madeleine thoroughly, and never complained. She sewed seventeen hours a day; but a prison contractor, who was working prisoners at a loss, sud-

denly cut down the price, and this reduced the day's wages of free labourers to nine sous. Seventeen hours of work, and nine sous a day! Her creditors were more pitiless than ever. The second-hand dealer, who had taken back nearly all his furniture, was constantly saying to her:

"When will you pay me, wench?"

Good God: what did they want her to do? She felt herself hunted down, and something of the wild beast began to develop within her. About the same time, Thenardier wrote to her that really he had waited with too much generosity, and that he must have a hundred francs immediately, or else little Cosette, just convalescing after her severe sickness, would be turned out of doors into the cold and upon the highway, and that she would become what she could, and would perish if she must. "A hundred francs," thought Fantine. "But where is there a place where one can earn a hundred sous a day?"

"Come!" said she, "I will sell what is left."

The unfortunate creature became a woman of the town.

CHAPTER XI

There is in all small cities, and there was at M—— sur M—— in particular, a set of young men who nibble their fifteen hundred livres of income in the country with the same air with which their fellows devour two hundred thousand francs a year at Paris. Eight or ten months after what has been related in the preceding pages, in the early part of January, 1823, one evening when it had been snowing, one of these dandies, one of these idlers, a "well-intentioned" man, for he wore a morillo, very warmly wrapped in one of those large cloaks which completed the fashionable costume in cold weather, was amusing himself with tormenting a creature who was walking back and forth before the window of the officers' café, in a ball-dress, with her neck and shoulders bare, and flowers upon her head. The dandy was smoking, for that was decidedly the fashion.

Every time that the woman passed before him he threw out at her, with a puff of smoke from his cigar, some remark that he thought was witty and pleasant, as: "How ugly you are!" "Are you trying to hide?" "You have lost your teeth!"; etc., etc. This gentleman's name was Monsieur Bamatabois. The woman, a rueful, bedizened spectre, who was walking backwards and forwards upon the snow, did not answer him, did

not even look at him, but continued her walk in silence and with a dismal regularity that brought her under his sarcasm every five minutes, like the condemned soldier who, at stated periods, returns under the rods. This failure to secure attention doubtless piqued the loafer, who, taking advantage of the moment when she turned, came up behind her with a stealthy step and stifling his laughter, stooped down, seized a handful of snow from the sidewalk, and threw it hastily into her back between her naked shoulders. The girl roared with rage, turned, bounded like a panther, and rushed upon the man, burying her nails in his face, and using the most frightful words that ever fell from the off-scouring of a guard-house. These insults were thrown out in a voice roughened by brandy, from a hideous mouth which lacked the two front teeth. It was Fantine.

At the noise which this made, the officers came out of the café, a crowd gathered, and a large circle was formed, laughing, jeering, and applauding, around this centre of attraction composed of two beings who could hardly be recognised as a man and a woman, the man defending himself, his hat knocked off, the woman kicking and striking, her head bare, shrieking, toothless, and without hair, livid with wrath, and horrible.

Suddenly a tall man advanced quickly from the crowd, seized the woman by her muddy satin waist, and said: "Follow me!"

The woman raised her head; her furious voice died out at once. Her eyes were glassy, from livid she had become pale, and she shuddered with a shudder of terror. She recognised Javert.

The dandy profited by this to steal away.

Javert dismissed the bystanders, broke up the circle, and walked off rapidly towards the Bureau of Police, which is at the end of the square, dragging the poor creature after him. She made no resistance, but followed mechanically. Neither spoke a word. The flock of spectators, in a paroxysm of joy, followed with their jokes. The deepest misery, an opportunity for obscenity.

When they reached the Bureau of Police, which was a low hall, warmed by a stove, and guarded by a sentinel, with a grated window looking out on the street, Javert opened the door, entered with Fantine, and closed the door behind him, to the great disappointment of the curious crowd who stood upon tiptoe and stretched their necks before the dirty windows of the guard-house in their endeavours to see. Curiosity is a kind of glutton. To see is to devour.

On entering, Fantine crouched down in a corner motionless and silent, like a frightened dog.

The sergeant of the guard placed a lighted candle on the table. Javert sat down, drew from his pocket a sheet of stamped paper, and began to write.

When he had finished, he signed his name, folded the paper, and handed it to the sergeant of the guard, saying: "Take three men, and carry this girl to jail." Then turning to Fantine: "You are in for six months."

The hapless woman shuddered.

"Six months! six months in prison!" cried she. "Six months to earn seven sous a day! but what will become of Cosette! my daughter! my daughter! Why, I still owe more than a hundred francs to the Thenardiens, Monsieur Inspector, do you know that?"

She dragged herself along on the floor, dirtied by the muddy boots of all these men, without rising, clasping her hands, and moving rapidly on her knees.

"Monsieur Javert," said she, "I beg your pity. I assure you that I was not in the wrong. If you had seen the beginning, you would have seen. I swear to you by the good God that I was not in the wrong. That gentleman, whom I do not know, threw snow in my back. Have they the right to throw snow into our backs when we are going along quietly like that without doing any harm to anybody? Have pity on me, Monsieur Javert."

She talked thus, bent double, shaken with sobs, blinded by tears, her neck bare, clenching her hands, coughing with a dry and short cough, stammering very feebly with an agonised voice. Great grief is a divine and terrible radiance which transfigures the wretched. At that moment Fantine had again become beautiful. At certain instants, she stopped and tenderly kissed the policeman's coat. She would have softened a heart of granite; but you cannot soften a heart of wood.

"Come!" said Javert, "I have heard you. Haven't you got through? March off at once—you have your six months; the Eternal Father in person could do nothing for you."

At those solemn words, *The Eternal Father in person could do nothing for you*, she understood that her sentence was fixed. She sank down, murmuring:

"Mercy!"

Javert turned his back.

The soldiers seized her by the arms.

A few minutes before a man had entered without being noticed. He had closed the door, and stood with his back against it, and heard the despairing supplication of Fantine.

When the soldiers put their hands upon the wretched being, who would not rise, he stepped forward out of the shadow and said :

“One moment, if you please!”

Javert raised his eyes and recognised Monsieur Madeleine. He took off his hat, and bowing with a sort of angry awkwardness :

“Pardon, Monsieur Mayor——”

This word, Monsieur Mayor, had a strange effect upon Fantine. She sprang to her feet at once, like a spectre rising from the ground, pushed back the soldiers with her arms, walked straight to Monsieur Madeleine before they could stop her, and gazing at him fixedly, with a wild look, she exclaimed :

“Ah! it is you, then, who are Monsieur Mayor!”

Then she burst out laughing and spat in his face.

Monsieur Madeleine wiped his face and said :

“Inspector Javert, set this woman at liberty.”

Javert felt as though he were on the point of losing his senses.

The Mayor's words were not less strange a blow to Fantine. She raised her bare arm and clung to the damper of the stove as if she were staggered. Meanwhile she looked all around and began to talk in a low voice, as if speaking to herself :

“At liberty!—they let me go! I am not to go to prison for six months! Who was it said that? It is not possible that anybody said that. I misunderstood. That can not be this monster of a Mayor! Was it you, my good Monsieur Javert, who told them to set me at liberty? Oh, look now! I will tell you and you will let me go. This monster of a Mayor, this old whelp of a Mayor, he is the cause of all this. Think of it, Monsieur Javert, he turned me away on account of a parcel of beggars who told stories in the workshop. Was not that horrible! To turn away a poor girl who does her work honestly! Since that I could not earn enough, and all the wretchedness has come. To begin with, there is a change that you gentlemen of the police ought to make—that is, to stop prison contractors from wronging poor people. I will tell you how it is. Listen. You earn twelve sous at shirt-making, that falls to nine sous, not enough to live. Then we must do what we can. For me, I had my little Cosette, and I had to be a bad woman. You see now that it is the beggar of a Mayor who has done all this, and then I did stamp on the hat of this gentleman in front of the officers' café. But he—he had spoiled my whole dress with the snow. We women—we have only one silk dress for evening. See, you, I have

never meant to do wrong, in truth, Monsieur Javert, and I see everywhere much worse women than I am who are much more fortunate. Oh, Monsieur Javert, it is you who said that they must let me go, is it not? Go and inquire, speak to my landlord; I pay my rent, and he will surely tell you that I am honest. Oh dear, I beg your pardon, I have touched—I did not know it—the damper of the stove, and it smokes.”

Monsieur Madeleine listened with profound attention. While she was talking, he had fumbled in his waistcoat, had taken out his purse and opened it. It was empty. He had put it back into his pocket. He said to Fantine:

“How much did you say that you owed?”

Fantine, who had only looked at Javert, turned towards him:

“Who said anything to you?”

Then addressing herself to the soldiers:

“Say now, did you see how I spat in his face? Oh, you old scoundrel of a Mayor, you come here to frighten me, but I am not afraid of you. I am afraid of Monsieur Javert. I am afraid of my good Monsieur Javert!”

Javert until that moment had remained standing, motionless, his eyes fixed on the ground, looking, in the midst of the scene, like a statue which was waiting to be placed in position. Suddenly he raised his head with an expression of sovereign authority—an expression always the more frightful in proportion as power is vested in beings of lower grade; ferocious in the wild beast, atrocious in the undeveloped man.

“Sergeant,” exclaimed he, “don’t you see that this vagabond is going off? Who told you to let her go?”

“I,” said Madeleine.

“Monsieur Mayor, that cannot be done.”

At this Monsieur Madeleine folded his arms and said in a severe tone which nobody in the city had ever yet heard:

“The matter of which you speak belongs to the municipal police. By the terms of articles nine, eleven, fifteen and sixty-six of the code of criminal law, I am the judge of it. I order that this woman be set at liberty.”

Javert endeavoured to make a last attempt.

“But, Monsieur Mayor——”

“I refer you to article eighty-one of the laws of December 13th, 1799, upon illegal imprisonment.”

“Monsieur Mayor, permit——”

“Not another word.”

“However——”

“Retire,” said Monsieur Madeleine.

Javert received the blow, standing in front, and with open

breast like a Russian soldier. He bowed to the ground before the Mayor, and went out.

Fantine stood by the door and looked at him with stupor as he passed before her.

When Javert was gone, Monsieur Madeleine turned towards her and said to her, speaking slowly and with difficulty, like a man who is struggling that he may not weep:

"I have heard you. I know nothing of what you have said. I believe that it is true. I did not even know that you had left my workshop. Why did you not apply to me? But now! I will pay your debts, I will have your child come to you, or you shall go to her. You shall live here, at Paris, or where you will. I will take charge of your child and you. You shall do no more work if you do not wish to. I will give you all the money that you need. You shall again become honest in again becoming happy. More than that, listen. I declare from this moment, if all is as you say, and I do not doubt it, that you had never ceased to be virtuous and holy before God. Oh, poor woman!"

This was more than poor Fantine could bear. To have Cosette! to leave this infamous life! to live free, rich, happy, honest, with Cosette! to see suddenly spring up in the midst of her misery all these realities of paradise! She looked as if she were stupefied at the man who was speaking to her, and could only pour out two or three sobs: "Oh! oh! oh!" Her limbs gave way, she threw herself upon her knees before Monsieur Madeleine, and before he could prevent it, he felt that she had seized his hand and carried it to her lips.

Then she fainted.

CHAPTER XII

Monsieur Madeleine had Fantine taken to the Infirmary, which was in his house. He confided her to the sisters, who put her to bed. A violent fever came on, and she passed a part of the night in delirious ravings. Finally she fell asleep.

That same night Javert wrote a letter. Next morning he carried this letter himself to the Post Office of M—— sur M——. It was directed to Paris and bore this address: "To Monsieur Chabouillet, Secretary of Monsieur the Prefect of Police."

As the affair of the Bureau of Police had been noised about, the Postmistress and some others who saw the letter before it was sent, and who recognised Javert's handwriting in the

address, thought he was sending in his resignation. Monsieur Madeleine wrote immediately to the Thenardiers. Fantine owed them a hundred and twenty francs, he sent them three hundred francs, telling them to pay themselves out of it, and bring the child at once to M—— sur M——, where her mother, who was sick, wanted her.

This astonished Thenardier.

"The devil!" he said to his wife, "we won't let go of the child. It may be that this lark will become a milch cow. I guess some silly fellow has been smitten by the mother."

He replied by a bill of five hundred and some odd francs carefully drawn up. In this bill figured two incontestable items for upwards of three hundred francs, one of a physician and the other of an apothecary who had attended and supplied Eponine and Azelma during two long illnesses. Cosette, as we have said, had not been ill. This was only a slight substitution of names. Thenardier wrote at the bottom of the bill: "Received on account three hundred francs."

Monsieur Madeleine immediately sent three hundred francs more, and wrote: "Make haste to bring Cosette."

"Christy!" said Thenardier, "we won't let go of the girl."

Meanwhile Fantine had not recovered. She still remained in the infirmary.

Monsieur Madeleine came to see her twice a day, and at each visit she asked him:

"Shall I see my Cosette soon?"

He answered:

"Perhaps to-morrow. I expect her every moment."

The Thenardiers, however, did not "let go of the child"; they gave a hundred bad reasons. Cosette was too delicate to travel in the winter-time, and then there were a number of little petty debts, of which they were collecting the bills, etc., etc.

"I will send somebody for Cosette," said Monsieur Madeleine; "if necessary, I will go myself."

He wrote at Fantine's dictation this letter, which he signed.

"Monsieur Thenardier:

"You will deliver Cosette to the bearer.

"He will settle all small debts.

"I have the honour to salute you with consideration.

"FANTINE."

In the meantime a serious matter intervened. In vain we chisel as best we can the mysterious block of which our life is made, the black vein of destiny reappears continually.

One morning Monsieur Madeleine was in his office arranging for some pressing business of the mayoralty, in case he should decide to go to Montfermeil himself, when he was informed that Javert, the inspector of the police, wished to speak with him. On hearing his name spoken, Monsieur Madeleine could not repress a disagreeable impression. Since the affair of the Bureau of Police, Javert had more than ever avoided him, and Monsieur Madeleine had not seen him at all.

"Let him come in," said he.

Javert entered. The Mayor did not look up, but continued to make notes on the papers.

"Monsieur Mayor, I come to ask you to be so kind as to make charges and procure my dismissal." Javert sighed deeply, and continued sadly and coldly.

"Monsieur Mayor, six weeks ago, after that scene about that girl, I was enraged and I denounced you."

"Denounced me?"

"To the Prefecture of Police at Paris."

Monsieur Madeleine who did not laugh much oftener than Javert, began to laugh:

"As a Mayor having encroached upon the police?"

"As a former convict."

The Mayor became livid.

Javert, who had not raised his eyes, continued:

"I believed it. For a long time I had suspicions. A resemblance, information of you obtained at Faverolles, your immense strength; the affair of old Fauchelevent; your skill as a marksman; your leg which drags a little—and in fact I don't know what other stupidities; but at last I took you for the man named Jean Valjean."

"Named what? How did you call that name?"

"Jean Valjean. He was a convict I saw twenty years ago, when I was adjutant of the galley guard at Toulon. After leaving the galleys this Valjean, it appears, robbed a Bishop's palace, then he committed another robbery with weapons in his hands, in a highway, on a little Savoyard. For eight years his whereabouts have been unknown, and search has been made for him. I fancied—in short, I have done this thing. Anger determined me, and I denounced you to the Prefect."

M. Madeleine who had taken up the file of papers again, a few moments before, said with a tone of perfect indifference: "And what answer did you get?"

"That I was crazy."

"Well!"

"Well; they were right."

"It is fortunate that you think so!"

"It must be so, for the real Jean Valjean has been found."

The paper that M. Madeleine held fell from his hand; he raised his head, looked steadily at Javert, and said in an inexpressible tone:

"Ah!"

Javert continued:

"I will tell you how it is, Monsieur Mayor. There was, it appears, in the country, near Ailly-le-Haut Clocher, a simple sort of fellow who was called Father Champmathieu. He was very poor. Nobody paid any attention to him. Such folks live, one hardly knows how. Finally, this last fall, Father Champmathieu was arrested for stealing cider apples from —, but that is of no consequence. There was a theft, a wall scaled, branches of trees broken. Our Champmathieu was arrested; he had even then a branch of an apple tree in his hand. The rogue was caged. So far, it was more than a penitentiary matter. But here comes in the hand of Providence. The jail being in bad condition, the police justice thought it best to take him to Arras, where the prison of the department is. In this prison at Arras there was a former convict named Brevet, who is there for some trifle, and who, for his good conduct, has been made turnkey. No sooner was Champmathieu set down, than Brevet cried out: 'Ha, ha! I know that man. He is a *fagot*.' *

"Look up here, my good man. You are Jean Valjean.' 'Jean Valjean! Who is Jean Valjean?' Champmathieu plays off the astonished. 'Don't play ignorance,' said Brevet. 'You are Jean Valjean: you were in the galleys at Toulon. It is twenty years ago. We were there together.' Champmathieu denied it all. Faith! you understand: they fathomed it. Search has been made at Toulon. Besides Brevet there are only two convicts who have seen Jean Valjean. They are convicts for life; their names are Cochepaille and Chenildieu. These men were brought up from the galleys and confronted with the pretended Champmathieu. They did not hesitate. To them as well as to Brevet it was Jean Valjean. Same age: fifty-four years old; same height; same appearance, in fact the same man; it is he. At this time it was that I sent my denunciation to the Prefecture at Paris. They replied that I was out of my mind and that Jean Valjean was at Arras in the hands of justice. You may imagine how that astonished me; I who believed that I had here the same Jean Valjean. I wrote to the justice: he sent for me and brought Champmathieu before me."

* Former convict.

"Well," interrupted Monsieur Madeleine.

Javert replied, with an incorruptible and sad face:

"Monsieur Mayor, truth is truth. I am sorry for it, but that man is Jean Valjean. I recognised him also."

Monsieur Madeleine said in a very low voice:

"Are you sure?"

Javert began to laugh with the suppressed laugh which indicates profound conviction.

"I'm sure!"

He remained a moment in thought, mechanically taking up pinches of the powdered wood used to dry ink, from the box on the table, and then added:

"And now that I see the real Jean Valjean, I do not understand how I ever could have believed anything else. I beg your pardon, Monsieur Mayor."

In uttering the serious and supplicating words to him who six weeks before had humiliated him before the entire guard, and had said "Retire!" Javert, this haughty man, was unconsciously full of simplicity and dignity. Monsieur Madeleine answered his request, by this abrupt question:

"And what did the man say?"

"Oh, bless me, Monsieur Mayor, the affair is a bad one. If it is Jean Valjean, it is a second offence. To climb a wall, break a branch, and take apples, for a child is only a trespass; for a man it is a misdemeanour; for a convict it is a crime. Sculing a wall and theft includes everything. It is not a case for a police court, but for the Assizes. It is not a few days' imprisonment, but the galleys for life. And then there is the affair of the little Savoyard, who I hope will be found. The devil! There is something to struggle against, is there not? There would be for anybody but Jean Valjean. But Jean Valjean is a sly fellow. And that is just where I recognise him. Anybody else would know that he was in a hot place, and would rave and cry out, as the tea-kettle sings on the fire; he would say that he was not Jean Valjean, et cetera. But this man pretends not to understand, he says: 'I am Champ-mathieu; I have no more to say.' He puts on an appearance of astonishment; he plays the brute. Oh, the rascal is cunning! But it is all the same, there is the evidence. Four persons have recognised him, and the old villain will be condemned. It has been taken to the Assizes at Arras. I am going to testify. I have been summoned."

Monsieur Madeleine had turned again to his desk, and was quietly looking over his papers, reading and writing alternately, like a man pressed with business. He turned again towards Javert:

"That will do, Javert. What day then?"

"The case will be tried to-morrow, and I must leave by the diligence to-night."

Monsieur Madeleine made an imperceptible motion.

"And how long will the matter last?"

"One day at longest. Sentence will be pronounced at latest to-morrow evening. But I shall not wait for the sentence, which is certain; as soon as my testimony is given I shall return here."

"Very well," said Monsieur Madeleine.

And he dismissed him with a wave of his hand.

Javert did not go.

"Your pardon, monsieur," said he.

"What more is there?" asked Monsieur Madeleine.

"Monsieur Mayor, there is one thing more to which I desire to call your attention."

"What is it?"

"It is that I ought to be dismissed."

Monsieur Madeleine arose.

"Javert, you are a man of honour, and I esteem you. You exaggerate your fault. Besides, this is an offence which concerns me. You are worthy of promotion rather than disgrace. I desire you to keep your place."

Javert looked at Monsieur Madeleine with his calm eyes, in whose depths it seemed that one beheld his conscience, unenlightened, but stern and pure.

Then he bowed profoundly, and went towards the door. There he turned round; his eyes yet downcast.

"Monsieur Mayor, I will continue in the service until I am relieved."

He went out. Monsieur Madeleine sat musing, listening to his firm and resolute step as it died away along the corridor.

CHAPTER XIII

Fantine awaited each day the appearance of Monsieur Madeleine as one awaits a ray of warmth and of joy. She would say to the sisters: "I live only when the Mayor is here."

That day she had more fever. As soon as she saw Monsieur Madeleine, she asked him:

"Cosette?"

He answered with a smile:

"Very soon."

Monsieur Madeleine, while with Fantine, seemed the same

as usual. Only he stayed an hour instead of half an hour, to the great satisfaction of Fantine. He made a thousand charges to everybody that the sick woman might want for nothing. It was noticed that at one moment his countenance became very sombre. But this was explained when it was known that the doctor had, bending close to his ear, said to him: "She is sinking fast."

Then he returned to the Mayor's office, and the office boy saw him examine attentively a road-map of France which hung in his room. He made a few figures in pencil upon a piece of paper.

From the Mayor's office he went to the outskirts of the city, to a Fleming's, Master Scaufflaer, Frenchified into Scaufflaire, who kept horses to let and "chaises if desired."

Monsieur Madeleine found Master Scaufflaire at home busy repairing a harness.

"Master Scaufflaire," he asked, "have you a good horse?"

"Monsieur Mayor," said the Fleming, "all my horses are good. What do you understand by a good horse?"

"I understand a horse that can go twenty leagues in a day."

"Has Monsieur the Mayor reflected that it is winter?"

Monsieur Madeleine raised his head and said:

"The horse and the tilbury will be before my door tomorrow at half-past four in the morning."

"That is understood, Monsieur Mayor," answered Scaufflaire.

"Has your horse good forelegs?" said Monsieur Madeleine.

"Yes, Monsieur Mayor. You will hold him up a little going down-hill. Is there much down-hill between here and where you are going?"

"Don't forget to be at my door precisely at half-past four in the morning," answered Monsieur Madeleine, and he went out.

The Fleming was left "dumbfounded," as he said himself some time afterwards.

Meanwhile Monsieur Madeleine had reached home. The reader has doubtless divined that Monsieur Madeleine is none other than Jean Valjean. We have but little to add to what the reader already knows concerning what happened to Jean Valjean since his adventure with Petit Gervais. From that moment, we have seen, he was another man. What the Bishop had desired to do with him, that he had executed. It was more than a transformation—it was a transfiguration.

He succeeded in escaping from sight, sold the Bishop's silver, keeping only the candlesticks as souvenirs, glided quietly from

city to city across France, came to M—— sur M——, conceived the idea that we have described, accomplished what we have related, gained the point of making himself unassailable and inaccessible, and thenceforward—established at M—— sur M——, happy to feel his conscience saddened by his past, and the last half of his existence giving the lie to the first—he lived peaceably reassured and hopeful, having but two thoughts: to conceal his name and to sanctify his life—to escape from men and to return to God.

CHAPTER XIV

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when Monsieur Madeleine reached Arras. He had spent fourteen hours in this trip, which he expected to make in six. He did himself the justice to feel that it was not his fault; but at bottom he was not sorry for it.

He was not acquainted in Arras, the streets were dark, and he went haphazard. Nevertheless he seemed to refrain obstinately from asking his way. He crossed the little river Crinchon, and found himself in a labyrinth of narrow streets, where he was soon lost. A citizen came along with a lantern. After some hesitation, he determined to speak to this man, but not until he had looked before and behind, as if he were afraid that somebody might overhear the question he was about to ask.

"Monsieur," said he, "the Court-House, if you please?"

"You are not a resident of the city, Monsieur," answered the citizen, who was an old man; "well, follow me, I am going right by the Court-House, that is to say the City Hall."

As they walked along, the citizen said to him:

"If Monsieur wishes to see a trial, he is rather late. Ordinarily the sessions close at six o'clock."

However, when they reached the great square, the citizen showed him four long lighted windows on the front of a vast dark building.

"Faith, Monsieur, you are in time, you are fortunate. Do you see those four windows? That is the Court of Assizes. There is a light there. Then they have not finished. The case must have been prolonged, and they are having an evening session. Are you interested in this case? Is it a criminal trial? Are you a witness?"

He answered:

"I have no business; I only wish to speak to a lawyer."

"That's another thing," said the citizen. "Stop, Monsieur, here is the door. The doorkeeper is up there. You have only to go up the grand stairway."

He followed the citizen's instructions, and in a few minutes found himself in a hall where there were many people, and scattered groups of lawyers in their robes, whispering, here and there.

The obscurity was such that he felt no fear in addressing the first lawyer whom he met.

"Monsieur," said he, "is there any means of getting into the hall?"

"I think not, really. There is a great crowd. However, they are taking a recess. Some people have come out, and when the session is resumed, you can try."

"How do you get in?"

"Through that large door."

An officer stood near the door which opened into the court-room.

He asked this officer:

"Monsieur, will the door be opened soon?"

"It will not be opened," said the officer.

The officer added, after a silence:

"There are, indeed, two or three places still behind the Monsieur the Judge, but Monsieur the Judge admits none but public functionaries to them."

So saying, the officer turned his back.

Monsieur Madeleine retired with his head bowed down, crossed the ante-chamber, and walked slowly down the staircase, seeming to hesitate at every step. It is probable that he was holding counsel with himself. When he reached the turn of the stairway, he leaned against the railing and folded his arms. Suddenly he opened his coat, drew out his pocket-book, took out a pencil, tore out a sheet, and wrote rapidly upon that sheet, by the glimmering light, this line: *Monsieur Madeleine, Mayor of M—— sur M——*. Then he went up the stairs again rapidly, passed through the crowd, walked straight to the officer, handed him the paper, and said to him with authority: "Carry that to Monsieur the Judge." The judge of the Royal Court of Douai, who was holding this term of the Assizes at Arras, was familiar—as well as everybody else—with this name, so profoundly and so universally honoured. When the officer, quietly opening the door which led from the counsel-chamber to the court-room, bent behind the judge's chair and handed him the paper, on which were written the lines we have just read, adding: "This gentleman

desires to witness the trial;" the judge made a hasty movement of deference, seized a pen, wrote a few words at the bottom of the paper, and handed it back to the officer, saying to him: "Let him enter."

In a few minutes Monsieur Madeleine found himself in a large hall, dimly lighted, and noisy and silent by turns, where all the machinery of a criminal trial was exhibited, with its petty, yet solemn gravity, before the multitude.

At one end of the hall, that at which he found himself, heedless judges, in threadbare robes, were biting their fingernails, or closing their eyelids: at the other end was a ragged rabble; there were lawyers in all sorts of attitudes; soldiers with honest and hard faces; old, stained wainscoting, a dirty ceiling, tables covered with serge, which was more nearly yellow than green; doors blackened by finger-marks; tavern lamps, giving more smoke than light, on nails in the panelling; candles in brass candlesticks, on the tables: everywhere obscurity, unsightliness, and gloom; and from all this there arose an austere and august impression; for men felt therein the presence of that great human thing which is called law, and that great divine thing that is called justice.

No man in the multitude paid any attention to him. All eyes converged on a single point, a wooden bench placed against a little door, along the wall at the left hand of the judge. Upon this bench, which was lighted by several candles, was a man between two gendarmes.

This was the man.

He did not look for him, he saw him. His eyes went towards him naturally, as if they had known in advance where he was.

He thought he saw himself, older, doubtless, not precisely the same in features, but alike in attitude and appearance, with that bristling hair, with those wild and restless eyeballs, with that blouse—just as he was on the day he entered D——, full of hatred, and concealing in his soul this hideous hoard of frightful thoughts which he had spent nineteen years in gathering upon the floor of the galleys.

He said to himself, with a shudder: "Great God! shall I again come to this?"

This being appeared at least sixty years old. There was something indescribably rough, stupid, and terrified in his appearance.

The prosecuting attorney replied to the counsel for the defence. He was violent and flowery, like most prosecuting attorneys.

The time had come for closing the case. The judge com-

manded the accused to rise, and put the usual question: "Have you anything to add to your defence?"

The man, standing, and twirling in his hand a hideous cap which he had, seemed not to hear.

The judge repeated the question.

This time the man heard and appeared to comprehend. He started like one awakening from sleep, cast his eyes around him, looked at the spectators, the gendarmes, his counsel, the jurors, and the court, placed his huge fist on the bar before him, looked around again, and suddenly fixing his eyes upon the prosecuting attorney, began to speak. He said:

"I have this to say: That I have been a wheelwright at Paris; that it was at M. Baloup's, too. It is a hard life to be a wheelwright, you always work outdoors, in yards, under sheds when you have good bosses, never in shops, because you must have room, you see. Look here, I am telling the truth. You have only to ask if 'tisn't so. Ask! how stupid I am! Paris is a gulf. Who is there that knows Father Champ-mathieu? But there is M. Baloup. Go and see M. Baloup. I don't know what more you want of me. I am tired of your everlasting nonsense. What is everybody after me for like a mad dog?"

The prosecuting attorney addressed the judge:

"Sir, in the presence of the confused but very adroit degenerations of the accused, who endeavours to pass for an idiot, but who will not succeed in it—we will prevent him—we request that it will please you and the court to call again within the bar the convicts Brevet, Cochepaille, and Chenildieu, and police-inspector Javert, and to submit them to a final interrogation concerning the identity of the accused with the convict Jean Valjean."

"I must remind the prosecuting attorney," said the presiding judge, "that police-inspector Javert, recalled by his duties to the chief town of a neighbouring district, left the hall and the city also as soon as his testimony was taken. We granted him this permission, with the consent of the prosecuting attorney and the counsel of the accused."

The judge gave an order to an officer, and a moment afterwards the door of the witness-room opened, and the officer, accompanied by a gendarme, ready to lend assistance, led in the convict Brevet. The audience was in breathless suspense, and all hearts palpitated as if they contained but a single soul.

"Brevet," said the judge, "you have suffered infamous punishment, and cannot take an oath."

Brevet cast down his eyes.

"Nevertheless," continued the judge, "even in the man

whom the law has degraded there may remain, if divine justice permit, a sentiment of honour and equity. To that sentiment I appeal in this decisive hour. If it still exists in you, as I hope, reflect before you answer me; consider on the one hand this man, whom a word from you may destroy; on the other hand, justice, which a word from you may enlighten. The moment is a solemn one, and there is still time to retract if you think yourself mistaken. Prisoner, rise. Brevet, look well upon the prisoner; collect your remembrances, and say, on your soul and conscience, whether you still recognise this man as your former comrade in the galleys, Jean Valjean."

Brevet looked at the prisoner, then turned again to the court.

"Yes, your honour; I was the first to recognise him, and still do so. This man is Jean Valjean, who came to Toulon in 1796 and left in 1815. I left a year after. He looks like a brute now, but he must have grown stupid with age: at the galleys he was sullen. I recognise him now, positively."

"Sit down," said the judge. "Prisoner, remain standing."

Chenildieu was brought in, a convict for life, as was shown by his red cloak and green cap. He was undergoing his punishment in the galleys of Toulon, whence he had been brought for this occasion.

The judge addressed nearly the same words to him as to Brevet. Chenildieu burst out laughing.

"Gad! do I recognise him? We were five years on the same chain. You're sulky with me, are you, old boy?"

"Sit down," said the judge.

The officer brought in Cochepaille: this other convict for life, brought from the galleys and dressed in red like Chenildieu, was a peasant from Lourdes, and a semi-bear of the Pyrenées. The judge attempted to move him by a few serious and pathetic words, and asked him, as he had the others, whether he still recognised, without hesitation or difficulty, the man standing before him.

"It is Jean Valjean," said Cochepaille. "The same they called Jean-the-Jack, he was so strong."

Each of the affirmations of these three men, evidently sincere and in good faith, had excited in the audience a murmur of evil augury for the accused—a murmur which increased in force and continuance every time a new declaration was added to the preceding one. The prisoner himself listened to them with that astonished countenance which, according to the prosecution, was his principal means of defence. At this moment there was a movement near the judge. A voice was heard exclaiming:

'Brevet, Chenildieu, Cochepaille, look this way!'

LES MISERABLES

So lamentable and terrible was this voice, that those who heard it felt their blood run cold. All eyes turned towards the spot whence it came. A man, who had been sitting among the privileged spectators behind the court, had risen, pushed open the low door which separated the tribunal from the bar, and was standing in the centre of the hall. The judge, the prosecuting attorney, Monsieur Bamatabois, twenty persons recognised him, and exclaimed at once:

"Monsieur Madeleine!"

The sensation was indescribable. There was a moment of hesitation in the auditory. The voice had been so thrilling, the man standing there appeared so calm, that at first nobody could comprehend it. They asked who had cried out. They could not believe that this tranquil man had uttered that fearful cry.

Monsieur Madeleine turned towards the jurors and court, and said in a mild voice:

"Gentlemen of the jury, release the accused. Your honour, order my arrest. He is not the man whom you seek; it is I. I am Jean Valjean."

Not a breath stirred. To the first commotion of astonishment had succeeded a sepulchral silence. That species of religious awe was felt in the hall which thrills the multitude at the accomplishment of a grand action.

Nevertheless, the face of the judge was marked with sympathy and sadness; he exchanged glances with the prosecuting attorney, and a few whispered words with the assistant judges. He turned to the spectators and asked in a tone which was understood by all:

"Is there a physician here?"

Monsieur Madeleine turned to the three convicts.

"Well, I recognise you, Brevet, do you remember——?"

He paused, hesitated a moment, and said:

"Do you remember those checkered, knit suspenders that you had in the galleys?"

Brevet started as if struck with surprise, and gazed wildly at him from head to foot. He continued:

"Chenildieu, surnamed by yourself Je-nie-Dieu, the whole of your left shoulder has been burned deeply, from laying it one day on a chafing-dish full of embers, to efface the three letters T. F. P., which yet are still to be seen there. Answer me, is this true?"

"It is true!" said Chenildieu.

It was evident that Jean Valjean was before their eyes. The fact shone forth. The appearance of this man had been enough fully to clear up the case, so obscure a moment before.

Without need of any further explanation, the multitude, as by a sort of electric revelation, comprehended instantly, and at a single glance, this simple and magnificent story of a man giving himself up that another might not be condemned in his place. The details, the hesitation, the slight reluctance possible, were lost in this immense, luminous fact.

It was an impression which quickly passed over, but for the moment it was irresistible.

"I will not disturb the proceedings further," continued Jean Valjean. "I am going, since I am not arrested. I have many things to do. Monsieur the prosecuting attorney knows where I am going, and will have me arrested when he chooses."

He walked towards the outer door. Not a voice was raised, not an arm stretched out to prevent him. All stood aside. There was at this moment an indescribable divinity within him which made the multitude fall back and make way before a man. He passed through the throng with slow steps. It was never known who opened the door, but it is certain that the door was open when he came to it. On reaching it he turned and said:

"Monsieur the Prosecuting Attorney, I remain at your disposal."

He then addressed himself to the auditory.

"You all, all who are here, think me worthy of pity, do you not? Great God! when I think of what I have been on the point of doing, I think myself worthy of envy. Still, would that all this had not happened!"

He went out, and the door closed as it had opened, for those who do deeds sovereignly great are always sure of being served by somebody in the multitude.

Less than an hour afterwards, the verdict of the jury discharged from all accusation the said Champmathieu; and Champmathieu, set at liberty forthwith, went his way stupefied, thinking all men mad, and understanding nothing of this vision.

CHAPTER XV

Day began to dawn. Fantine had had a feverish and sleepless night, yet full of happy visions; she fell asleep at daybreak. Sister Simplice, who had watched her, took advantage of this slumber to go and prepare a new potion of quinine. The good sister had been for a few moments in the laboratory of the infirmary, bending over her vials and drugs, looking

at them very closely on account of the mist which the dawn casts over all objects, when suddenly she turned her head and uttered a faint cry. M. Madeleine stood before her. He had just come in silently.

"You, Monsieur the Mayor!" she exclaimed.

"How is the poor woman?" he answered in a low voice.

"Better just now. But we have been very anxious indeed."

She explained what had happened, that Fantine had been very ill the night before, but was now better, because she believed that the Mayor had gone to Montfermeil for her child. The sister dared not question the Mayor, but she saw clearly from his manner that he had not come from that place.

"That is well," said he. "You did right not to deceive her."

"Yes," returned the Sister, "but now, Monsieur the Mayor, when she sees you without her child, what shall we tell her?"

He reflected for a moment, then said:

"God will inspire us."

"But, we cannot tell her a lie," murmured the Sister, in a smothered tone.

The broad daylight streamed into the room, and lighted up the face of M. Madeleine.

The Sister happened to raise her eyes.

"Oh, God, Monsieur," she exclaimed, "what has befallen you? Your hair is all white!"

"White!" said he.

Sister Simplicie had no mirror; she rummaged in a case of instruments, and found a little glass which the physician of the infirmary used to discover whether the breath had left the body of a patient. M. M^r Madeleine took the glass, looked at his hair in it, and said, "Indeed!"

He spoke the word with indifference, as if thinking of something else.

The Sister felt chilled by an unknown something of which she caught a glimpse in all this.

He asked: "Can I see her?"

"Will not Monsieur the Mayor bring back her child?" asked the Sister, scarcely daring to venture a question.

"Certainly, but two or three days are necessary."

"If she does not see Monsieur the Mayor here," continued the Sister timidly, "she will not know that he has returned; it will be easy for her to have patience, and when the child comes, she will think naturally that Monsieur the Mayor had just arrived with her. Then we will not have to tell her a falsehood."

Monsieur Madeleine seemed to reflect for a few moments, then said, with his calm gravity:

"No, my sister, I must see her. Perhaps I have not much time."

The nun did not seem to notice this "perhaps," which gave an obscure and singular insignificance to the word of Monsieur the Mayor. She answered, lowering her eyes and voice respectfully:

"In that case, she is asleep, but Monsieur can go in."

He made a few remarks about a door that shut with difficulty, the noise of which might awaken the sick woman; then entered the chamber of Fantine, approached her bed, and opened the curtains. She was sleeping. Her breath came from her chest with that tragic sound which is peculiar to these diseases, and which rends the heart of unhappy mothers, watching the slumbers of their fated children. But this laboured respiration scarcely disturbed an ineffable serenity which overshadowed her countenance, and transfigured her in her sleep. Her pallor had become whiteness and her cheeks were glowing. Her long fair eyelashes, the only beauty left of her maidenhood and youth, quivered as they closed upon her cheek. Her whole person trembled as if with fluttering of wings which were felt, but could not be seen, and which seemed to unfold and bear her away. To see her thus, no one could have believed that her life was despaired of. She looked more as if about to soar away than to die.

Monsieur Madeleine remained for some time motionless near the bed, looking by turns at the patient and the crucifix, as he had done two months before, on the day when he came for the first time to see her in this asylum. The Sister had not entered with him. He stood by the bed, with his finger on his lips, as if there were someone in the room to silence. She opened her eyes, saw him, and said, tranquilly, with a smile:

"And Cosette?"

He took her hand. "Cosette is beautiful," said he. "Cosette is well: you shall see her soon, but be quiet. You talk too fast; and then you throw your arms out of bed, which makes you cough."

In fact, coughing fits interrupted Fantine at almost every word.

She began to count on her fingers.

"One, two, three, four. She is seven years old. In five years she will have a white veil and open-worked stockings, and will look like a little lady. Oh, my good sister, you do

not know how foolish I am; here I am thinking of my child's first communion!"

Suddenly she ceased speaking, and raised her head mechanically. Fantine had become appalling.

She did not speak; she did not breathe; she half-raised herself in the bed, the covering fell from her emaciated shoulders; her countenance, radiant a moment before, became livid, and her eyes, dilated with terror, seemed to fasten on something before her at the other end of the room.

"Good God!" exclaimed Monsieur Madeleine. "What is the matter, Fantine?"

She did not answer; she did not take her eyes from the object which she seemed to see, but touched his arm with one hand, and with the other made a sign to him to look behind him.

He turned, and saw Javert.

Fantine had not seen Javert since the day the Mayor had wrested her from him. Her sick brain accounted for nothing, only she was sure that he had come for her. She could not endure this hideous face, she felt as if she were dying, she hid her face with both hands, and shrieked in anguish:

"Monsieur Madeleine, save me!"

Jean Valjean, we shall call him by no other name henceforth, had risen. He said to Fantine in his gentlest and calmest tone:

"Be composed; it is not for you that he comes."

He turned to Javert and said:

"I know what you want."

Javert answered:

"Hurry along."

Javert advanced to the middle of the chamber, exclaiming:

"Hey, there; are you coming?"

The unhappy woman looked around her. There was no one but the nun and the Mayor. To whom could this contemptuous familiarity be addressed? To herself alone. She shuddered.

Then she saw a mysterious thing, so mysterious that its like had never appeared to her in the darkest delirium of fever.

She saw the spy Javert seize Monsieur the Mayor by the collar; she saw Monsieur the Mayor bow his head. The world seemed vanishing before her sight.

Javert, in fact, had taken Jean Valjean by the collar.

"Monsieur the Mayor?" cried Fantine.

Javert burst into a horrid laugh, displaying all his teeth.

"There is no Monsieur the Mayor here any longer!" said

he. "There is a robber, there is a brigand, there is a convict called Jean Valjean, and I have got him! That is what there is!"

Fantine started upright, supporting herself by her rigid arms and hands; she looked at Jean Valjean, then at Javert, and then at the nun; she opened her mouth as if to speak; a rattle came from her throat, her teeth struck together, she stretched out her arms in anguish, convulsively opening her hands, and groping about her like one who is drowning; then sank suddenly back upon the pillow.

Her head struck the head of the bed and fell forward on her breast, the mouth gaping, the eyes open and glazed.

She was dead.

CHAPTER XVI

Javert put Jean Valjean in the city prison.

The arrest of Monsieur Madeleine produced a sensation, or rather an extraordinary commotion, at M—— sur M——. We are sorry not to be able to disguise the fact that, on this single sentence, "*He was a galley-slave*," almost everybody abandoned him. Three or four persons alone in the whole city remained faithful to his memory. The old portress who had been his servant was among the number.

On the evening of the same day, the worthy old woman was sitting in her lodge, still quite bewildered and sunk in sad reflections. Just then the window of her box opened, a hand passed through the opening, took the key and stand, and lighted the taper at the candle which was burning.

The portress raised her eyes; she was transfixed with astonishment; a cry rose to her lips, but she could not give it utterance.

She knew the hand, the arm, the coat-sleeve.

It was M. Madeleine.

She was speechless for some seconds; thunder-struck, as she said herself afterwards, in giving her account of the affair.

"My God! Monsieur Mayor!" she exclaimed, "I thought you were——"

She stopped; the end of her sentence would not have been respectful to the beginning. To her, Jean Valjean was still Monsieur the Mayor.

He completed her thought.

"In prison," said he. "I was there; I broke a bar from a window, let myself fall from the top of a roof, and here I

am. I am going to my room; go for Sister Simplicie. She is doubtless beside this poor woman."

The old servant hastily obeyed while he ascended the staircase which led to his room. On reaching the top, he left his taper stand on the upper stairs, opened his door with little noise, felt his way to the window and closed the shutter, then came back, took his taper, and went into the chamber. He took from a wardrobe an old shirt which he tore into several pieces, and in which he packed the two silver candlesticks. In all this there was neither haste nor agitation. And even while packing the Bishop's candlesticks, he was eating a piece of black bread. It was probably prison bread which he had brought away in escaping.

Two gentle taps were heard at the door.

"Come in," said he.

It was Sister Simplicie.

She was pale, her eyes were red, and the candle which she held trembled in her hand. The shocks of destiny have this peculiarity; however subdued or disciplined our feelings may be, they draw out the human nature from the depths of our souls, and compel us to exhibit it to others. In the agitations of this day the nun had again become a woman. She had wept, and she was trembling.

Jean Valjean had written a few lines on a piece of paper, which he handed to the nun, saying: "Sister, you will give this to the curé."

The paper was not folded. She cast her eyes on it.

"You may read it," said he.

She read: "I beg Monsieur Curé to take charge of all that I leave here. He will please defray therefrom the expenses of my trial, and of the burial of the woman who died this morning. The remainder is for the poor."

The Sister attempted to speak, but could scarcely stammer out a few inarticulate sounds. She succeeded, however, in saying:

"Does not Monsieur the Mayor wish to see this poor unfortunate again for the last time?"

"No," said he, "I am pursued; I should only be arrested in her chamber; it would disturb her."

CHAPTER XVII

Jean Valjean had been retaken.

We shall be pardoned for passing rapidly over the painful details. We shall merely reproduce an item published in a newspaper of the day, some few months after the remarkable events that occurred at M—— sur M——.

We copy the article from the *Drapeau Blanc*. It is dated the 25th of July, 1823 :

“A district of the Pas-de-Calais has just been the scene of an extraordinary occurrence. A stranger in that department, known as Monsieur Madeleine, had, within a few years past, restored by means of certain new processes, the manufacture of jet and black glass ware—a former local branch of industry. He had made his own fortune by it—and, in fact, that of the entire district. In acknowledgment of his services he had been appointed Mayor. The police have discovered that Monsieur Madeleine was none other than an escaped convict, condemned in 1796 for robbery, and named Jean Valjean. This Jean Valjean has been sent back to the galleys. It appears that previous to his arrest he succeeded in withdrawing from Laffitte’s a sum amounting to more than half-a-million which he had deposited there, and which it is said, by the way, he had very legitimately realised in his business. Since his return to the galleys at Toulon it has been impossible to discover where Jean Valjean concealed this money.”

Before proceeding further, it will not be amiss to relate in some detail a singular incident which took place, about the same time, at Montfermeil, and which, perhaps, does not fall in badly with certain conjectures of the public authorities.

Very shortly after the time when the authorities took it into their heads that the liberated convict Jean Valjean had, during his escape of a few days’ duration, been prowling about Montfermeil, it was remarked in that village that a certain old road-labourer named Boulatruelle had “a fancy” for the woods. People in the neighbourhood claimed to know that Boulatruelle had been in the galleys; he was under police surveillance, and, as he could find no work anywhere, the Government employed him at half-wages as a mender on the cross-road from Gagny to Lagny.

What had been observed was this :

For some time past Boulatruelle had left off his work at stone-breaking and keeping the road in order very early, and had gone into the woods with his pick. He would be met

towards evening in the remotest glades and the wildest thickets, having the appearance of a person looking for something, and sometimes digging holes. The good wives who passed that way took him at first for Beelzebub, then they recognised Boulatruelle and were by no means reassured. These chance meetings seemed greatly to disconcert Boulatruelle. It was clear that he was trying to conceal himself, and that there was something mysterious in his operations.

However, the visits of Boulatruelle to the woods ceased, and he recommenced his regular labour on the road. People began to talk about something else.

A few, however, retained their curiosity, thinking that there might be involved in the affair, not the fabulous treasures of the legend, but some goodly matter more substantial than the devil's bank-bills, and that Boulatruelle had half spied out the secret. The worst puzzled of all were the schoolmaster and the tavern-keeper, Thenardier, who was everybody's friend, and who had not disdained to strike up an intimacy with even Boulatruelle.

"He has been in the galleys," said Thenardier. "Good Lord! nobody knows who is there or who may be there!"

One evening the schoolmaster remarked that in old times the authorities would have inquired into what Boulatruelle was about in the woods, and that he would have been compelled to speak—even put to torture if needs were—and that Boulatruelle would not have held out had he been put to the question by water, for example.

"Let us put him to the wine question," said Thenardier.

So they made up a party and plied the old roadsman with drink. Boulatruelle drank enormously, but said little. He combined with admirable art and in masterly proportions the thirst of a guzzler with the discretion of a judge. However, by dint of returning to the charge and by putting together and twisting the obscure expressions that he did let fall, Thenardier and the schoolmaster made out, as they thought, the following:

One morning about daybreak as he was going to his work, Boulatruelle had been surprised at seeing under a bush at the corner of the wood, a pickaxe and spade, as one would say, *hidden there*. However, he supposed that they were the pick and spade of old Six-Fours, the water-carrier, and thought no more about it. But on the evening of the same day he had seen, without being seen himself—for he was hidden behind a large tree—"a person who did not belong at all to that region, and whom he (Boulatruelle) knew very well"—or, as Thenardier translated it, "an old comrade at the galleys"—turn off from the high road towards the thickest part of the

wood. Boulatruelle obstinately refused to tell the stranger's name. This person carried a package, something square, like a large box or a small trunk. Boulatruelle was surprised. Seven or eight minutes, however, elapsed before it occurred to him to follow the "person". But he was too late. The person was already in the thick woods, night had come on, and Boulatruelle did not succeed in overtaking him. Thereupon he made up his mind to watch the outskirts of the wood. "There was a moon." Two or three hours later, Boulatruelle saw this person come forth again from the wood, this time carrying not the little trunk but a pick and a spade. Boulatruelle let the person pass unmolested, because, as he thought to himself, the other was three times as strong as he, was armed with a pickaxe, and would probably murder him, on recognising his countenance and seeing that he, in turning, was recognised. Touching display of feeling in two old companions unexpectedly meeting! But the pick and the spade were a ray of light to Boulatruelle; he hastened to the bushes in the morning, and found neither one nor the other. He thence concluded that this person, on entering the wood, had dug a hole with his pick, had buried the chest, and had then filled up the hole with his spade. Now, as the chest was too small to contain a corpse, it must contain money; hence his continued searches. Boulatruelle had explored, sounded and ransacked the whole forest, and had rummaged every spot where the earth seemed to have been freshly disturbed. But all in vain.

He had turned up nothing. Nobody thought any more about it at Montfermeil, excepting a few good gossips, who said: "Be sure the road-labourer of Gagny didn't make all that fuss for nothing: the devil was certainly there."

CHAPTER XVIII

Towards the end of October, in that same year, 1823, the inhabitants of Toulon saw coming back into their port, in consequence of heavy weather, and in order to repair some damages, the ship *Orion*, which was at a later period employed at Brest as a vessel of instruction, and which then formed a part of the Mediterranean squadron.

She was moored near the Arsenal. She was in commission, and they were repairing her. The hull had not been injured on the starboard side, but a few planks had been taken off here and there, according to custom, to admit the air to the framework.

One morning, the throng which was gazing at her witnessed an accident.

The crew were engaged in furling sail. The topman, whose duty it was to take in the starboard upper corner of the main-topsail, lost his balance. He was seen tottering; the dense throng assembled on the wharf of the Arsenal uttered a cry, the man's head overbalanced his body, and he whirled over the yard, his arms outstretched towards the deep; as he went over, he grasped the man-ropes, first with one hand, and then with the other, and hung suspended in that manner. The sea lay far below him at a giddy depth. The shock of his fall had given to the man-ropes a violent swinging motion, and the poor fellow hung dangling to and fro at the end of this line like a stone in a sling.

Suddenly, a man was discovered clambering up the rigging with the agility of a wild cat. This man was clad in red—it was a convict; he wore a green cap—it was a convict for life. As he reached the round top, a gust of wind blew off his cap, and revealed a head entirely white, it was not a young man.

In fact, one of the convicts employed on board in some prison task had, at the first alarm, run to the officer of the watch, and, amid the confusion and hesitation of the crew, while all the sailors trembled and shrank back, had asked permission to save the topman's life at the risk of his own. A sign of assent being given, with one blow of a hammer he broke the chain riveted to the iron ring at his ankle, then took a rope in his hand, and flung himself into the shrouds. Nobody, at the moment, noticed with what ease the chain was broken. It was only some time afterwards that anybody remembered it.

In a twinkling he was upon the yard. He paused a few seconds, and seemed to measure it with his glance. Those seconds, during which the wind swayed the sailor to and fro at the end of the rope, seemed ages to the lookers-on. At length the convict raised his eyes to heaven and took a step forward. The crowd drew a long breath. He was seen to run along the yard. On reaching its extreme tip, he fastened one end of the rope he had with him, and let the other hang at full length. Thereupon he began to let himself down by his hands along this rope, and then there was an inexpressible sensation of terror that instead of one man, two were seen; dangling at that giddy height.

You would have said it was a spider seizing a fly; only, in this case, the spider was bringing life, and not death. Ten thousand eyes were fixed upon the group. Not a cry; not a word was uttered; the same emotion contracted every brow.

Every man held his breath, as if afraid to add the least whisper to the wind which was swaying the two unfortunate men.

However, the convict had, at length, managed to make his way down to the seaman. It was time; one minute more, and the man, exhausted and despairing, would have fallen into the deep. The convict firmly secured him to the rope to which he clung with one hand while he worked with the other. Finally he was seen reascending to the yard, and hauling the sailor after him; he supported him there, for an instant, to let him recover his strength, and then, lifting him in his arms, carried him, as he walked along the yard, to the crosstrees, and from there to the round-top, where he left him in the hands of his messmates.

Then the throng applauded; old galley sergeants wept, women hugged each other on the wharves, and, on all sides, voices were heard exclaiming, with a sort of tenderly subdued enthusiasm: "This man must be pardoned!"

He, however, had made it a point of duty to descend again immediately, and go back to his work. In order to arrive more quickly, he slid down the rigging, and started to run along a lower yard. All eyes were following him. There was a certain moment when everyone felt alarmed, whether it was that he felt fatigued, or because his head swam, people thought they saw him hesitate and stagger. Suddenly the throng uttered a thrilling outcry: the convict had fallen into the sea.

The fall was perilous. The frigate *Algeiras* was moored close to the *Orion*, and the poor convict had plunged between the two ships. It was feared that he would be drawn under one or the other. Four men sprang, at once, into a boat. The people cheered them on, and anxiety again took possession of all minds. The man had not again risen to the surface. He had disappeared in the sea, without making even a ripple, as though he had fallen into a cask of oil. They sounded and dragged the place. It was in vain. The search was continued until night, but not even the body was found.

The next morning, the *Toulon Journal* published the following lines:—"Nov. 17, 1823. Yesterday, a convict at work on board of the *Orion*, on his return from rescuing a sailor, fell into the sea, and was drowned. His body was not recovered. It is presumed that it has been caught under the piles at the pier-head of the Arsenal. This man was registered by the number 9430, and his name was Jean Valjean."

CHAPTER XIX

Montfermeil is situated between Livry and Chelles, upon the southern slope of the high plateau which separates the Ourcq from the Marne. At present it is a considerable town, adorned all the year round with stuccoed villas, and, on Sundays, with citizens in full blossom. In 1823 there were at Montfermeil neither so many white houses nor so many comfortable citizens; it was nothing but a village in the woods. It was a peaceful and charming spot, and not upon the road to any place; the inhabitants cheaply enjoyed that rural life which is so luxuriant and so easy of enjoyment. But water was scarce there on account of the height of the plateau.

They had to go a considerable distance for it. The end of the village towards Gagny drew its water from the magnificent ponds in the forest on that side; the other end, which surrounds the church and which is towards Chelles, found drinking-water only at a little spring on the side of the hill, near the road to Chelles, about fifteen minutes' walk from Montfermeil.

This was the terror of the poor being whom the reader has not perhaps forgotten—little Cosette. It will be remembered that Cosette was useful to the Thenardiers in two ways, they got pay from the mother and work from the child. Thus when the mother ceased entirely to pay, we have seen why, in the preceding chapters, the Thenardiers kept Cosette. She saved them a servant. In that capacity she ran for water when it was wanted. So the child, always horrified at the idea of going to the spring at night, took good care that water should never be wanting at the house.

Christmas in the year 1823 was particularly brilliant at Montfermeil. The early part of the winter had been mild; so far there had been neither frost nor snow. Some jugglers from Paris had obtained permission from the Mayor to set up their stalls in the main street of the village, and a company of peddlars had, under the same licence, put up their booths in the square before the church, and even in the lane du Boulanger, upon which, as the reader perhaps remembers, the Thenardier chop-house was situated. This filled up the taverns and pot-houses, and gave to this little quiet place a noisy and joyous appearance.

Cosette was at her usual place, seated on the cross-piece of the kitchen table, near the fireplace; she was clad in rags; her bare feet were in wooden shoes, and by the light of the fire she was knitting woollen stockings for the little Thenardiers.

A young kitten was playing under the chairs. In a neighbouring room the fresh voices of two children were heard laughing and prattling; the voices of Eponine and Azelma.

In the chimney-corner, a cow-hide hung upon a nail.

Thenardier had just passed his fiftieth year; Madame Thenardier had reached her fortieth, which is the fiftieth for woman; so that there was an equilibrium of age between the husband and wife.

The reader has, perhaps, since her first appearance, preserved some remembrance of this huge Thenardiess,—for such we shall call the female of this species,—large, blonde, red, fat, brawny, square, enormous, and agile; she belonged, as we have said, to the race of those colossal wild women who posturise at fairs with paving-stones hung in their hair. She did everything about the house—the chamber-work, the washing, the cooking, anything she pleased, and played the deuce generally. Cosette was her only servant; a mouse in the service of an elephant.

The other Thenardier was a little man, meagre, pale, angular, bony, and lean, who appeared to be sick, and whose health was excellent; here his knavery began.

Cosette was musing sadly; for, though she was only eight years old, she had already suffered so much that she mused with the mournful air of an old woman.

She had a black eye from a blow of the Thenardiess's fist, which made the Thenardiess say from time to time, "How ugly she is with her patch on her eye."

Cosette was then thinking that it was evening, late in the evening, that the bowls and pitchers in the rooms of the travellers who had arrived must be filled immediately, and that there was no more water in the cistern.

One thing comforted her a little: they did not drink much water in the Thenardier tavern. There were plenty of people there who were thirsty; but it was that kind of thirst which reaches rather towards the jug than the pitcher. Had anybody asked for a glass of water among these glasses of wine, he would have seemed a savage to all those men. However, there was an instant when the child trembled; the Thenardiess raised the cover of a kettle which was boiling on the range, then took a glass and hastily approached the cistern. She turned the faucet; the child had raised her head and followed all her movements. A thin stream of water ran from the faucet, and filled the glass half full.

"Here," said she, "there is no more water!" Then she was silent for a moment. The child held her breath.

"Pshaw!" continued the Thenardiess, examining the half-filled glass, "there is enough of it, such as it is."

Cosette resumed her work, but for more than a quarter of an hour she felt her heart leaping into her throat like a great ball.

She counted the minutes as they thus rolled away, and eagerly wished it were morning.

From time to time, one of the drinkers would look out into the street and exclaim, "It is as black as an oven!" or "It would take a cat to go along the street without a lantern to-night!" And Cosette shuddered.

All at once, one of the pedlars who lodged in the tavern came in and said in a harsh voice:

"You have not watered my horse."

"Yes, we have, sure," replied the Thenardiess.

"I tell you no, ma'am," replied the pedlar.

Cosette came out from under the table.

"Mademoiselle Dog-without-a-name, go and carry some drink to this horse."

"But, ma'am," said Cosette feebly, "there is no water."

The Thenardiess threw the street door wide open.

"Well, go after some!"

Cosette hung her head, and went for an empty bucket that was by the chimney corner.

The bucket was larger than she, and the child could have sat down in it comfortably.

The Thenardiess went back to her range, and tasted what was in the kettle with a wooden spoon, grumbling the while.

"There is some at the spring. She is the worst girl that ever was. I think 'twould have been better if I'd left out the onions."

Then she fumbled in a drawer where there were some pennies, pepper and garlic.

"Here, Mamselle Toad," added she, "get a big loaf at the baker's as you come back. Here is fifteen sous."

Cosette had a little pocket in the side of her apron; she took the piece without saying a word and put it in that pocket.

Then she remained motionless, bucket in hand, the open door before her. She seemed to be waiting for somebody to come to her aid.

"Get along!" cried the Thenardiess.

Cosette went out. The door closed.

The row of booths extended along the street from the church, the reader will remember, as far as the Thenardier tavern. The last of these stalls, set up exactly opposite Thenardier's door, was a toy-shop, all glittering with trinkets, glass beads

and things magnificent in tin. In the first rank, and in front, the merchant had placed, upon a bed of white napkins, a great doll nearly two feet high, dressed in a robe of pink crape with golden wheat-ears on its head, and which had real hair and enamel eyes. The whole day this marvel had been displayed to the bewilderment of the passers under ten years of age, but there had not been found in Montfermeil a mother rich enough, or prodigal enough, to give it to her child. Eponine and Azelma had passed hours in contemplating it, and Cosette herself, furtively, it is true, had dared to look at it.

At the moment when Cosette went out, bucket in hand, all gloomy and overwhelmed as she was, she could not help raising her eyes towards this wonderful doll, towards *the lady*, as she called it. The poor child stopped petrified. She had not seen this doll so near before.

In this adoration she forgot everything, even the errand on which she had been sent. Suddenly, the harsh voice of the Thenardiess called her back to the reality: "How, jade, haven't you gone yet? Hold on; I am coming for you! I'd like to know what she's doing here? Little monster, be off!"

The Thenardiess had glanced into the street, and perceived Cosette in ecstasy.

Cosette fled with her bucket, running as fast as she could. As the Thenardier tavern was in that part of the village which is near the church, she had to go to the spring in the woods towards Chelles to draw water.

It was only seven or eight minutes' walk from the edge of the woods to the spring. Cosette knew the road, from traveling it several times a day. Strange thing, she did not lose her way. A remnant of instinct guided her blindly. But she neither turned her eyes to the right nor to the left, for fear of seeing things in the trees and in the bushes. Thus she arrived at the spring.

Cosette did not take time to breathe. It was very dark, but she was accustomed to come to this fountain. She felt with her left hand in the darkness for a young oak which bent over the spring and usually served her as a support, found a branch, swung herself from it, bent down and plunged the bucket in the water. She was for a moment so excited that her strength was tripled. When she was thus bent over, she did not notice that the pocket of her apron emptied itself into the spring. The fifteen-sous piece fell into the water. Cosette neither saw it nor heard it fall. She drew out the bucket almost full and set it on the grass.

This done, she perceived that her strength was exhausted. She was anxious to start at once; but the effort of filling the

bucket had been so great that it was impossible for her to take a step. She was compelled to sit down. She fell upon the grass and remained in a crouching posture.

She closed her eyes, then she opened them, without knowing why, without the power of doing otherwise. At her side, the water shaken in the bucket made circles that resembled serpents of white fire.

Above her head, the sky was covered with vast black clouds which were like sheets of smoke. The tragic mask of night seemed to bend vaguely over this child.

Without being conscious of what she was experiencing, Cosette felt that she was seized by this black enormity of nature. It was not merely terror that held her, but something more terrible even than terror. She shuddered. Words fail to express the peculiar strangeness of that shudder which chilled her through and through. Her eye had become wild. She felt that perhaps she would be compelled to return there at the same hour the next night.

Then, by a sort of instinct, to get out of this singular state, which she did not understand, but which terrified her, she began to count aloud one, two, three, four, up to ten, and when she had finished, she began again. This restored her to a real perception of things about her. Her hands, which she had wet in drawing the water, felt cold. She arose. Her fear had returned, a natural and insurmountable fear. She had only one thought, to fly; to fly with all her might, across woods, across fields, to houses and windows, to lighted candles. Her eyes fell upon the bucket that was before her. Such was the dread with which the Thenardiess inspired her, that she did not dare to go without the bucket of water. She grasped the handle with both hands. She could hardly lift the bucket.

However, she could not make much headway in this manner, and was getting along very slowly. She tried hard to shorten her resting spells, and to walk as far as possible between them. She remembered with anguish that it would take her more than an hour to return to Montfermeil thus, and that the Thenardiess would beat her. This anguish added to her dismay at being alone in the woods at night. She was worn out with fatigue, and was not yet out of the forest. Arriving near an old chestnut tree which she knew, she made a last halt, longer than the others, to get well rested, then she gathered all her strength, took up the bucket again, and began to walk on courageously. Meanwhile the poor little despairing thing could not help crying: "Oh! my God! my God!"

At that moment she felt all at once that the weight of the bucket was gone. A hand, which seemed enormous to her,

had just caught the handle, and was carrying it easily. She raised her head. A large dark form, straight and erect, was walking beside her in the gloom. It was a man who had come up behind her, and whom she had not heard. This man, without saying a word, had grasped the handle of the bucket she was carrying.

There are instincts for all the crises of life. The child was not afraid.

The thin and puny face of Cosette was vaguely outlined in the livid light of the sky.

"What is your name?" said the man.

"Cosette."

It seemed as if the man had an electric shock. He looked at her again, then continued:

"Who is it that has sent you out into the woods after water at this time of night?"

"Madame Thenardier."

The man resumed with a tone of voice which he tried to render indifferent, but in which there was nevertheless a singular tremor:

"What does she do, your Madame Thenardier?"

"She is my mistress," said the child. "She keeps the tavern."

"The tavern," said the man. "Well, I am going there to lodge to-night. Show me the way."

"We are going there," said the child.

The man walked very fast. Cosette followed him without difficulty. She felt fatigue no more. From time to time, she raised her eyes towards this man with a sort of tranquillity and inexpressible confidence. She had never been taught to turn towards Providence and to pray. However, she felt in her bosom something that resembled hope and joy, and which rose towards heaven.

They reached the village; Cosette guided the stranger through the streets. They passed by the bakery, but Cosette did not think of the bread she was to have brought back. The man questioned her no more, and now maintained a mournful silence. When they had passed the church, the man, seeing all these booths in the street, asked Cosette:

"Is it fair-time here?"

"No, Monsieur, it is Christmas."

As they drew near the tavern, Cosette timidly touched his arm:

"Monsieur?"

"What, my child?"

"Will you let me take the bucket now?"

"What for?"

"Because, if Madame sees that anybody brought it for me, she will beat me."

The man gave her the bucket. A moment after they were at the door of the chop-house.

CHAPTER XX

Cosette could not help casting one look towards the grand doll still displayed in the toy-shop, then she rapped. The door opened. The Thenardiess appeared with a candle in her hand.

"Oh! it is you, you little beggar! Lud-a-massy! you have taken your time! she has been playing, the wench!"

"Madame," said Cosette, trembling, "here is a gentleman who is coming to lodge."

The Thenardiess very quickly replacing her fierce air by her amiable grimace, a change at sight peculiar to innkeepers, and looked for the new-comer with eager eyes.

"Is it Monsieur?" said she.

"Yes, Madame," answered the man, touching his hat.

Rich travellers are not so polite. This gesture and the sight of the stranger's costume and baggage which the Thenardiess passed in review at a glance made the amiable grimace disappear and the fierce air reappear." She added drily:

"Ah! my brave man, I am very sorry, but I have no room."

"Put me where you will," said the man, "in the garret, in the stable. I will pay as if I had a room."

"Forty sous."

"Forty sous. Well."

The man, after leaving his stick and bundle on a bench, seated himself at a table on which Cosette had been quick to place a bottle of wine and a glass. The pedlar, who had asked for the bucket of water, had gone himself to carry it to his horse. Cosette had resumed her place under the kitchen table and her knitting.

The man, who hardly touched his lips to the wine he had turned out, was contemplating the child with a strange attention.

Suddenly, the Thenardiess exclaimed out:

"Oh! I forgot! that bread!"

Cosette, according to her custom whenever the Thenardiess raised her voice, sprang out quickly from under the table.

She had entirely forgotten the bread. She had recourse

to the expedient of children who are always terrified. She lied.

"Madame, the baker was shut."

"You ought to have knocked."

"I did knock, Madame."

"Well?"

"He didn't open."

"I'll find out to-morrow if that is true," said the Thenardiess, "and if you are lying you will lead a pretty dance. Meantime, give me back the fifteen-sous piece."

Cosette plunged her hand into her apron pocket, and turned white. The fifteen-sous piece was not there.

"Come," said the Thenardiess, "didn't you hear me?"

Cosette turned her pocket inside out; there was nothing there. What could have become of that money? The little unfortunate could not utter a word. She was petrified.

"Have you lost it, the fifteen-sous piece?" screamed the Thenardiess, "or do you want to steal it from me?"

At the same time she reached her arm towards the cowhide hanging in the chimney-corner.

This menacing movement gave Cosette the strength to cry out:

"Forgive me! Madame! Madame! I won't do so any more!"

The Thenardiess took down the whip.

Meanwhile the man in the yellow coat had been fumbling in his waistcoat pocket, without being noticed. The other travellers were drinking or playing cards, and paid no attention to anything.

Cosette was writhing with anguish in the chimney-corner, trying to gather up and hide her poor half-naked limbs. The Thenardiess raised her arm.

"I beg your pardon, Madame," said the man, "but I just now saw something fall out of the pocket of that little girl's apron and roll away. That may be it."

At the same time he stooped down and appeared to search on the floor for an instant.

"Just so, here it is," said he, rising.

And he handed a silver piece to the Thenardiess.

"Yes, that is it," said she.

That was not it, for it was a twenty-sous piece, but the Thenardiess found her profit in it. She put the piece in her pocket, and contented herself with casting a ferocious look at the child and saying:

"Don't let that happen again, ever."

Cosette went back to what the Thenardiess called "her

hole", and her large eye, fixed upon the unknown traveller, began to assume an expression that it had never known before. It was still only an artless astonishment, but a sort of blind confidence was associated with it.

"Oh you want supper?" asked the Thenardiess of the traveller.

He did not answer. He seemed to be thinking deeply.

"What is that man?" said she between her teeth. "It is some frightful pauper. He hasn't a penny for his supper. Is he going to pay me for his lodging only? It is very lucky, anyway, that he didn't think to steal the money that was on the floor."

A door now opened, and Eponine and Azelma came in.

They were really two pretty little girls, rather city girls than peasants, very charming, one with her well polished auburn tresses, the other with her long black braids falling down her back, and both so lively, neat, plump, fresh and healthy, that it was a pleasure to see them. They were warmly clad, but with such maternal art, that the thickness of the stuff detracted nothing from the coquetry of the fit. Winter was provided against without effacing spring. These two little girls shed light around them. Moreover, they were regnant. In their toilet, in their gaiety, in the noise they made, there was sovereignty. When they entered, the Thenardiess said to them in a scolding tone, which was full of adoration: "Ah! you are here then, you children!"

Then, taking them upon her knees one after the other, smoothing their hair, tying over their ribbons, and finally letting them go with that gentle sort of shake which is peculiar to mothers, she exclaimed:

"Are they dowdies!"

They went and sat down by the fire. They had a doll which they turned backwards and forwards upon their knees with many pretty prattlings. From time to time, Cosette raised her eyes from her knitting, and looked sadly at them as they were playing.

Eponine and Azelma did not notice Cosette. To them she was like the dog. These three little girls could not count twenty-four years among them all, and they already represented all human society; on one side envy, on the other disdain.

The doll of the Thenardier sisters was very much faded, and very old and broken; but it appeared none the less wonderful to Cosette, who had never in her life had a doll, a real doll, to use an expression that all children will understand.

All at once, the Thenardiess, who was continually going and

coming about the room, noticed that Cosette's attention was distracted, and that instead of working she was busied with the little girls who were playing.

"Ah! I've caught you!" cried she. "That is the way you work! I'll make you work with a cowhide, I will."

The stranger, without leaving his chair, turned towards the Thenardiess.

"Madame," said he, smiling confidently. "Pshaw! let her play!"

On the part of any traveller who had eaten a slice of mutton, and drunk two bottles of wine at his supper, and who had not had the appearance of a *horrid pauper*, such a wish would have been a command. But that a man who wore that hat should allow himself to have a desire, and that a man who wore that coat should permit himself to have a wish, was what the Thenardiess thought ought not to be tolerated. She replied sharply:

"She must work, for she eats. I don't support her to do nothing."

"What is it she is making?" said the stranger, in that gentle voice which contrasted so strangely with his beggar's clothes, and his porter's shoulders.

The Thenardiess deigned to answer.

"Stockings, if you please. Stockings for my little girls who have none worth speaking of, and will soon be going barefooted."

"And how much might this pair of stockings be worth, when it is finished?"

The Thenardiess cast a disdainful glance at him.

"At least thirty sous."

"Would you take five francs for them?" said the man.

"Goodness!" exclaimed a waggoner who was listening, with a horse-laugh, "five francs? It's a humbug! five bullets!"

Thenardier now thought it time to speak.

"Yes, monsieur, if it is your fancy, you can have that pair of stockings for five francs. We can't refuse anything to travellers."

"You must pay for them now," said the Thenardiess, in her short and peremptory way.

"I will buy that pair of stockings," answered the man, "and," added he, drawing a five-franc piece from his pocket and laying it on the table, "I will pay for them."

Then he turned toward Cosette.

"Now your work belongs to me. Play, my child!"

The waggoner was so affected by the five-franc piece that he left his glass and went to look at it.

"It's so, that's a fact!" cried he, as he looked at it. "A regular hindwheel! and no counterfeit!"

Thenardier approached, and silently put the piece in his pocket.

The Thenardiess had nothing to reply. She bit her lips, and her face assumed an expression of hatred.

Meanwhile Cosette trembled. She ventured to ask:

"Madame, is it true? can I play?"

"Play!" said the Thenardiess in a terrible voice.

"Thank you, madame," said Cosette. And, while her mouth thanked the Thenardiess, all her little soul was thanking the traveller.

Thenardier returned to his drink. His wife came and rested her elbow on the table at which the man was sitting.

"Monsieur," said she——

At this word, *Monsieur*, the man turned. The Thenardiess had called him before only "brave man" or "good man".

"You see, Monsieur," she pursued, putting on her sweetest look, which was still more unendurable than her ferocious manner, "I am very willing the child should play, I am not opposed to it; it is well for once, because you are generous. But you see, she is poor; she must work."

"The child is not yours, then?" asked the man.

"Oh dear! no, Monsieur! It is a little pauper that we have taken in through charity. A sort of imbecile child. She must have water on her brain. Her head is big, as you see. We do all we can for her, but we are not rich. We write in vain to her country; for six months we have had no answer. We think that her mother must be dead."

"Ah!" said the man, and he ' ' back into his reverie.

Cosette, under the table, was looking into the fire, which was reflected from her fixed eye; she was rocking a sort of rag baby that she had made, and as she rocked it, she sang in a low voice: "My mother is dead! my mother is dead! my mother is dead!"

All at once, Cosette stopped. She had just turned and seen the little Thenardiers' doll, which they had forsaken for the cat, and left on the floor, a few steps from the kitchen table.

Then she let the bundle, that only half-satisfied her, fall, and ran her eyes slowly around the room. The Thenardiess was whispering to her husband and counting some money, Eponine and Azelma were playing with the cat, the travellers were eating or drinking or singing, nobody was looking at her. She had not a moment to lose. She crept out from under the table on her hands and knees, made sure once more that nobody was watching her, then darted quickly

to the doll, and seized it. An instant afterwards she was at her place, seated, motionless, only turned in such a way as to keep the doll that she held in her arms in the shadow. The happiness of playing with a doll was so rare to her that it had all the violence of rapture.

Nobody had seen her, except the traveller, who was slowly eating his meagre supper.

This joy lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour.

But in spite of Cosette's precautions, she did not perceive that one of the doll's feet stuck out, and that the fire of the fireplace lighted it up very vividly. This rosy and luminous foot which protruded from the shadow suddenly caught Azelma's eye, and she said to Eponine: "Oh, sister!"

The two little girls stopped, stupefied. Cosette had dared to take the doll.

Eponine got up, and without letting go of the cat, went to her mother and began to pull at her skirt.

"Let me alone," said the mother; "what do you want?"

"Mother," said the child, "look there."

And she pointed at Cosette.

Cosette, wholly absorbed in the ecstasy of her possession, saw and heard nothing else.

The face of the Thenardiess assumed the peculiar expression which is composed of the terrible mingled with the commonplace, and which has given this class of women the name of furies.

She cried with a voice harsh with indignation:

"Cosette!"

Cosette shuddered as if the earth had quaked beneath her. She took the doll and placed it gently on the floor with a kind of veneration mingled with despair. Then, without taking away her eyes, she joined her hands, and, what is frightful to tell in a child of that age, she wrung them; then, what none of the emotions of the day had drawn from her, neither the run in the wood, nor the weight of the bucket of water, nor the loss of the money, nor the sight of the cowhide, nor even the stern words she had heard from the Thenardiess, she burst into tears. She sobbed.

Meanwhile the traveller arose.

"What is the matter?" said he to the Thenardiess.

"That beggar," answered the Thenardiess, "has dared to touch the children's doll."

"All this noise about that?" said the man. "Well, what if she did play with that doll?"

"She has touched it with her dirty hands!" continued the Thenardiess, "with her horrid hands!"

The man walked straight to the street door, opened it, and went out.

As soon as he had gone, the Thenardiess profited by his absence to give Cosette under the table a severe kick, which made the child shriek.

The door opened again, and the man reappeared, holding in his hands the fabulous doll of which we have spoken, and which had been the admiration of all the youngsters of the village since morning; he stood it up before Cosette, saying:

"Here, this is for you."

It is probable that during the time he had been there—more than an hour—in the midst of his reverie, he had caught confused glimpses of this toy-shop, lighted up with lamps and candles so splendidly that it shone through the bar-room window like an illumination.

Cosette raised her eyes; she saw the man approach her with that doll as she would have seen the sun approach, she heard those astounding words: "This is for you." She looked at him, she looked at the doll, then she drew back slowly, and went and hid as far as she could under the table in the corner of the room.

She wept no more, she cried no more, she had the appearance of no longer daring to breathe.

Cosette looked upon the wonderful doll with a sort of terror. Her face was still flooded with tears, but her eyes began to fill, like the sky in the breaking of the dawn, with strange radiations of joy. What she experienced at that moment was almost like what she would have felt if some one had said to her suddenly: "Little girl, you are queen of France."

It seemed to her that if she touched that doll, thunder would spring forth from it.

Which was true to some extent, for she thought that the Thenardiess would scold and beat her.

However, the attraction overcame her. She finally approached, and timidly murmured, turning towards the Thenardiess:

"Can I, Madame?"

No expression can describe her look, at once full of despair, dismay and transport.

"Good Lord!" said the Thenardiess, "it is yours. Since Monsieur gives it to you."

"Is it true, is it true, Monsieur?" said Cosette. "Is the lady for me?"

The stranger appeared to have his eyes full of tears. He seemed to be at that stage of emotion in which one does not

speak for fear of weeping. He nodded assent to Cosette, and put the hand of "the lady" in her little hand.

Cosette withdrew her hand hastily, as if that of "the lady" burned her, and looked down at the floor. We are compelled to add, that at that instant she thrust out her tongue enormously. All at once she turned, and seized the doll eagerly.

"I will call her Catherine," said she.

It was a strange moment when Cosette's rags met and pressed against the ribbons and the fresh pink muslins of the doll.

"Madame," said she, "may I put her in a chair?"

"Yes, my child," answered the Thenardiess.

It was Eponine and Azelma now who looked upon Cosette with envy.

Cosette placed Catherine on a chair, then sat down on the floor before her, and remained motionless, without saying a word, in the attitude of contemplation.

"Why don't you play, Cosette?" said the stranger.

"Oh! I am playing," answered the child.

This stranger, this unknown man, who seemed like a visit from Providence to Cosette, was at that moment the being which the Thenardiess hated more than aught else in the world. However, she was compelled to restrain herself. Her emotions were more than she could endure, accustomed as she was to dissimulation, by endeavouring to copy her husband in all her actions. She sent her daughters to bed immediately, then asked the man's permission to send Cosette to bed—"who is very tired to-day," added she, with a motherly air. Cosette went to bed, holding Catherine in her arms.

The man had leaned his elbows on the table, and resumed his attitude of reverie. All the other travellers, pedlars, and waggoners had drawn back a little, and sung no more. They looked upon him from a distance with a sort of respectful fear. This solitary man, so poorly clad, who took five-franc pieces from his pocket with so much indifference, and who lavished gigantic dolls on little brats in wooden shoes was certainly a magnificent and formidable goodman.

Several hours passed away. The Midnight Mass was said, the revel was finished, the drinkers had gone, the house was closed, the room was deserted, the fire had gone out, the stranger still remained in the same place and in the same posture. From time to time he changed the elbow on which he rested. That was all. But he had not spoken a word since Cosette was gone.

The Thenardiess alone, out of propriety and curiosity, had remained in the room.

"Is he going to spend the night like this?" grumbled the Thenardiess. When the clock struck two in the morning, she acknowledged herself beaten, and said to her husband: "I am going to bed, you may do as you like." The husband sat down at a table in a corner, lighted a candle, and began to read the *Courier Français*.

A good hour passed thus. Finally, Thenardier took off his cap, approached softly, and ventured to say:

"Is Monsieur not going to repose?"

"Yes," said the stranger, "you are right. Where is your stable?"

"Monsieur," said Thenardier, with a smile, "I will conduct Monsieur."

He took the candle, the man took his bundle and his staff, and Thenardier led him into a room on the first floor, which was very showy, furnished all in mahogany, with a high-post bedstead and red calico curtains.

"What is this?" said the traveller.

"It is properly our bridal chamber," said the innkeeper. "We occupy another like this, my spouse and I; this is not open more than three or four times in a year."

"I should have liked the stable as well," said the man, bluntly.

The innkeeper retired to his room; his wife was in bed, but not asleep. When she heard her husband's step, she turned toward him, and said:

"You know that I am going to kick Cosette outdoors to-morrow!"

Thenardier coolly answered:

"You are, indeed!"

They exchanged no further words, and in a few moments their candle was blown out.

For his part, the traveller had put his staff and bundle in a corner. The host gone, he sat down in an arm-chair, and remained some time thinking. Then he drew off his shoes, took one of the two candles, blew out the other, pushed open the door, and went out of the room looking about him as if he were searching for something. He passed through a hall, and came to the stairway. There he heard a very soft little sound, which resembled the breathing of a child. Guided by this sound he came to a sort of triangular nook built under the stairs, or, rather, formed by the staircase itself. This hole was nothing but the space beneath the stairs. There, among all sorts of old baskets and old rubbish, in the dust and among the cobwebs, there was a bed: if a mattress so full of holes, as to show the straw, and a covering so full of holes as to show

the mattress, can be called a bed. There were no sheets. This was placed on the floor immediately on the tiles. In this bed Cosette was sleeping.

The man approached and looked at her.

Cosette was sleeping soundly; she was dressed. In the winter she did not undress on account of the cold. She held the doll clasped in her arms; its large open eyes shone in the obscurity. From time to time she heaved a deep sigh, as if she were about to wake, and she hugged the doll almost convulsively. There was only one of her wooden shoes at the side of her bed. An open door near Cosette's nook disclosed a large dark room. The stranger entered. At the further end, through a glass window, he perceived two little beds with very white spreads. These were those of Azelma and Eponine. Half hid behind those beds was a willow cradle without curtains, in which a little boy who had cried all the evening was sleeping.

The stranger conjectured that this room communicated with that of the Thenardiens. He was about to withdraw when his eye fell upon the fireplace, one of those huge tavern fireplaces where there is always so little fire, when there is a fire, and which are so cold to look upon. In this one there was no fire, there were not even any ashes. What there was, however, attracted the traveller's attention. It was two little children's shoes, of coquettish shape and of different sizes. The traveller remembered the graceful and immemorial custom of children putting their shoes in the fireplace on Christmas night to wait there in the darkness in expectation of some shining gift from their good fairy. Eponine and Azelma had taken good care not to forget this, and each had put one of her shoes in the fireplace.

The traveller bent over them.

The fairy—that is to say, the mother—had already made her visit, and shining in each shoe was a beautiful new ten-sous piece.

The man rose up and was on the point of going away, when he perceived further along, by itself, in the darkest corner of the fireplace, another object. He looked, and recognised a shoe, a horrid wooden shoe of the clumsiest sort, half broken and covered with ashes and dried mud. It was Cosette's shoe. Cosette, with that touching confidence of childhood which can always be deceived without ever being discouraged, had also placed her shoe in the fireplace.

What a sublime and sweet thing is hope in a child who has never known anything but despair!

There was nothing in this wooden shoe.

The stranger fumbled in his waistcoat, bent over, and dropped into Cosette's shoe a gold louis.

Then he went back to his room with stealthy tread.

CHAPTER XXI

On the following morning, at least two hours before day, Thenardier, seated at a table in the bar-room, a candle by his side, with pen in hand, was making out the bill of the traveller. His wife was standing, half bent over him, following him with her eyes. After a good quarter of an hour, and some erasures, Thenardier produced this masterpiece:—

Bill of Monsieur in No. 1.

Supper	...	...	...	...	3 frs.
Room	...	...	...	...	10 "
Candle	...	..	...	...	5 "
Fire	...	...	...	...	4 "
Service	...	...	...	...	1 "
					<hr/>
Total	...	...	...	...	23 frs.

"Twenty-three francs!" exclaimed the woman, with an enthusiasm which was mingled with some hesitation.

Like all great artists, Thenardier was not satisfied.

"Pooh!" said he.

It was the accent of Castlereagh drawing up for the Congress of Vienna the bill which France was to pay.

Thenardier lighted his pipe just as the traveller came in.

"Up so soon!" said the Thenardiess; "is Monsieur going to leave us already?"

The traveller appeared pre-occupied, and absent-minded.

He answered:

"Yes, Madame, I am going away."

"Monsieur, then, had no business at Montfermeil," replied she.

"No, I am passing through; that is all, Madame," added he.

"What do I owe?"

The Thenardiess, without answering, handed him the folded bill.

The man unfolded the paper and looked at it: but his thoughts were evidently elsewhere.

"Madame," replied he, "do you do a good business in Montfermeil?"

"So-so, Monsieur," answered the Thenardiess, stupefied at seeing no other explosion.

She continued in a mournful and lamenting strain:

"Oh! Monsieur, the times are very hard, and then we have so few rich people around here! It is a very little place, you see. If we only had rich travellers now and then, like Monsieur! We have so many expenses! Why, that little girl eats us out of house and home."

"What little girl?"

"Why, the little girl you know! Cosette! the Lark, as they call her about here!"

The man replied in a voice which he endeavoured to render indifferent, and in which there was a slight tremulousness.

"Suppose you were relieved of her?"

The red and violent face of the woman became illumined with a hideous expression.

"Ah, Monsieur! my good Monsieur! take her, keep her, take her away, carry her off, sugar her, stuff her, drink her, eat her, and be blessed by the Holy Virgin and all the saints in Paradise!"

"Agreed!"

"Really! you will take her away?"

"In the meantime," continued the man, "I will pay my bill. How much is it?"

He cast a glance at the bill, and could not repress a movement of surprise.

"Twenty-three francs?"

The Thenardiess had had time to prepare herself for the shock. She replied with assurance:

"Yes, of course, Monsieur! it is twenty-three francs."

The stranger placed five five-franc pieces upon the table.

"Go for the little girl," said he.

At this moment Thenardier advanced into the middle of the room and said:

"Monsieur owes twenty-six sous."

"Twenty-six sous!" exclaimed the woman.

"Twenty sous for the room," continued Thenardier coldly, "and six for supper. As to the little girl, I must have some talk with Monsieur about that. Leave us, wife."

The Thenardiess was dazzled by one of those unexpected flashes which emanate from talent. She felt that the great actor had entered upon the scene, answered not a word, and went out.

As soon as they were alone, Thenardier offered the traveller a chair. The traveller sat down, but Thenardier remained

standing, and his face assumed a singular expression of good nature and simplicity.

"Monsieur," said he, "listen, I must say that I adore this child."

The stranger looked at him steadily.

Thenardier was one of those men who comprehend a situation at a glance. He decided that this was the moment to advance straightforward and swiftly. He did what great captains do at that decisive instant which they alone can recognise; he unmasked his battery at once.

"Monsieur," said he, "I must have fifteen hundred francs."

The stranger took from his side-pocket an old black leather pocket-book, opened it, and drew forth three bank bills which he placed upon the table. He then rested his large thumb on these bills, and said to the tavern-keeper:

"Bring Cosette."

An instant after Cosette entered the bar-room.

The stranger took the bundle he had brought and untied it. This bundle contained a little woollen frock, an apron, a coarse cotton under-garment, a petticoat, a scarf, woollen stockings, and shoes—a complete dress for a girl of seven years. It was all in black.

"My child," said the man, "take this and go and dress yourself quick."

The day was breaking when those of the inhabitants of Montfermeil who were beginning to open their doors saw pass on the road to Paris a poorly-clad goodman leading a little girl dressed in mourning who had a pink doll in her arms. They were going towards Livry.

CHAPTER XXII

The Thenardiess, according to her custom, had left her husband alone. She was expecting great events. When the man and Cosette were gone, Thenardier, after a good quarter of an hour, took her aside and showed her the fifteen hundred francs.

"What's that?" said she.

It was the first time since the beginning of their house-keeping that she had dared to criticise the act of her master.

He felt the blow.

"True—you are right," said he; "I am a fool. Give me my hat."

He folded the three bank bills, thrust them into his pocket,

and started in all haste, but he missed the direction and took the road to the right. Some neighbours of whom he inquired put him on the track; the Lark and the man had been seen to go in the direction of Livry.

Suddenly he stopped and struck his forehead, like a man who has forgotten the main thing, and who thinks of retracing his steps.

"I ought to have taken my gun!" said he.

And he continued on his way, going rapidly forward, and almost as if he were certain, with the sagacity of the fox scenting a flock of partridges.

In fact, when he had passed the ponds and crossed obliquely the large meadow at the right of the Avenue de Bellevue, as he reached the grassy path which nearly encircles the hill, and which covers the arch of the old aqueduct of the Abbey of Chelles, he perceived above a bush the hat on which he had already built so many conjectures. It was the man's hat. The bushes were low. Thenardier perceived that the man and Cosette were seated there. The child could not be seen, she was so short, but he could see the head of the doll.

Thenardier was not deceived. The man had sat down there to give Cosette a little rest. The chophouse-keeper turned aside the bushes, and suddenly appeared before the eyes of those whom he sought.

"Pardon me, excuse me, Monsieur," said he, all out of breath, "but here are your fifteen hundred francs."

So saying, he held out the three bank bills to the stranger. The man raised his eyes:

"What does that mean?"

Thenardier answered respectfully:

"Monsieur, that means that I take back Cosette."

The man, without answering, felt in his pocket, and Thenardier saw the pocket-book containing the bank bills reappear.

The tavern-keeper felt a thrill of joy.

"Good!" thought he; "hold on. He is going to corrupt me!"

Before opening the pocket-book, the traveller cast a look about him. The place was entirely deserted. There was not a soul either in the wood or in the valley. The man opened the pocket-book and drew from it, not the handful of bank bills which Thenardier expected, but a little piece of paper, which he unfolded and presented open to the innkeeper, saying:

"You are right. Read that!"

Thenardier took the paper, and read.

"M—— sur M——, March 25, 1823.

"MONSIEUR THENARDIER:

"You will deliver Cosette to the bearer. He will settle all small debts.

"I have the honour to salute you with consideration.

"FANTINE."

"You know that signature?" replied the man.

It was indeed the signature of Fantine. Thenardier recognised it.

There was nothing to say. He felt doubly enraged, enraged at being compelled to give up the bribe which he hoped for, and enraged at being beaten. The man added:

"You can keep this paper as your receipt."

Thenardier retreated in good order.

"This signature is very well imitated," he grumbled between his teeth. "Well, so be it!"

Then he made a desperate effort.

"Monsieur," said he, "it is all right. Then you are the person. But you must settle 'all small debts'. There is a large amount due to me."

The man rose to his feet, and said at the same time, snapping with his thumb and finger some dust from his threadbare sleeve:

"Monsieur Thenardier, in January the mother reckoned that she owed you a hundred and twenty francs; you sent her in February a memorandum of five hundred francs; you received three hundred francs at the end of February, and three hundred at the beginning of March. There have since elapsed nine months, which, at fifteen francs per month, the price agreed upon, amounts to a hundred and thirty-five francs. You had received a hundred francs in advance. There remain thirty-five francs due you. I have just given you fifteen hundred francs."

Thenardier felt what the wolf feels the moment when he finds himself seized and crushed by the steel jaws of the trap.

The stranger said quietly:

"Come, Cosette."

He took Cosette with his left hand, and with the right picked up his staff, which was on the ground.

Thenardier noted the enormous size of the cudgel and the solitude of the place.

The man disappeared in the wood with the child, leaving the chophouse-keeper motionless and nonplussed.

As they walked away, Thenardier observed his broad shoulders, a little rounded, and his big fists.

Then his eyes fell back upon his own puny arms and thin hands. "I must have been a fool indeed," thought he, "not to have brought my gun, as I was going on a hunt."

However, the innkeeper did not abandon the pursuit.

"I must know where he goes," said he; and he began to follow them at a distance. There remained two things in his possession, one a bitter mockery, the piece of paper signed "Fantine", and the other a consolation, the fifteen hundred francs.

The man was leading Cosette in the direction of Livry and Bondy. He was walking slowly, his head bent down, in an attitude of reflection and sadness. The winter had bereft the wood of foliage, so that Thenardier did not lose sight of them, though remaining at a considerable distance behind. From time to time the man turned, and looked to see if he were followed. Suddenly he perceived Thenardier. He at once entered a coppice with Cosette, and both disappeared from sight.

CHAPTER XXIII

Jean Valjean was not dead.

When he fell into the sea, or rather when he threw himself into it, he was, as we have seen, free from his irons. He swam under water to a ship at anchor to which a boat was fastened.

He found means to conceal himself in this boat until evening. At night he betook himself again to the water, and reached the land a short distance from Cape Brun.

There, as he did not lack for money, he could procure clothes. A little public-house in the environs of Balaguier was then the place which supplied clothing for escaped convicts, a lucrative business. Then Jean Valjean, like all those joyless fugitives who are endeavouring to throw off the track the spy of the law and social fatality, followed an obscure and wandering path. He finally reached Paris. We have seen him at Montfermeil.

His first care, on reaching Paris, had been to purchase a mourning dress for a little girl of seven years, then to procure lodgings. That done, he had gone to Montfermeil. He was believed to be dead, and that thickened the obscurity which surrounded him. At Paris there fell into his hands a paper, which chronicled the fact. He felt reassured, and almost as much at peace as if he really had been dead.

On the evening of the same day that Jean Valjean had rescued Cosette from the clutches of the Thenardiers, he entered Paris again. He entered the city at nightfall, with the child, by the Barrière de Monceaux. There he took a cabriolet, which carried him as far as the esplanade of the Observatory. There he got out, paid the driver, took Cosette by the hand, and both in the darkness of the night, through the deserted streets in the vicinity of l'Ourcine and la Glacière, walked towards the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The day had been strange and full of emotion for Cosette; they had eaten behind hedges bread and cheese bought in isolated chophouses; they had often changed carriages, and had travelled short distances on foot. She did not complain; but she was tired, and Jean Valjean perceived it by her pulling more heavily at his hand while walking. He took her in his arms; Cosette, without letting go of Catherine, laid her head on Jean Valjean's shoulder, and went to sleep.

At the corner of the Rue des Vignes-Saint-Marcel, near a manufactory and between two garden-walls, could be seen at the time of which we speak an old ruined dwelling that, at first sight, seemed as small as a cottage, yet was, in reality, as vast as a cathedral. It stood with its gable end towards the highway, and hence its apparent diminutiveness. Nearly the whole house was hidden. Only the door and one window could be seen.

The letter-carriers called the house No. 50-52; but it was known, in the quarter, as Gorbeau House, Gorbeau having been the name of a former proprietor.

Before this tenement Jean Valjean stopped. Like the birds of prey, he had chosen this lonely place to make his nest.

He fumbled in his waistcoat and took from it a sort of night-key, opened the door, entered, then carefully closed it again, and ascended the stairway, still carrying Cosette.

At the top of the stairway he drew from his pocket another key, with which he opened another door. The chamber which he entered and closed again immediately was a sort of garret, rather spacious, furnished only with a mattress spread on the floor, a table, and a few chairs. A stove containing a fire, the coals of which were visible, stood in one corner. The street lamp of the boulevard shed a dim light through this poor interior. At the further extremity there was a little room containing a cot bed. On this Jean Valjean laid the child without waking her.

He struck a light with flint and steel and lit a candle, which, with his tinder-box, stood ready, beforehand, on the table; and, as he had done on the preceding evening, he began to gaze

upon Cosette with a look of ecstasy, in which the expression of goodness and tenderness went almost to the verge of insanity. The little girl, with that tranquil confidence which belongs only to extreme strength or extreme weakness, had fallen asleep without knowing with whom she was, and continued to slumber without knowing where she was.

Jean Valjean bent down and kissed the child's hand.

Nine months before, he had kissed the hand of the mother, who also had just fallen asleep.

The same mournful, pious, agonizing feeling now filled his heart.

He knelt down by the bedside of Cosette.

It was broad daylight, when he awoke, and yet the child slept on. A pale ray from the December sun struggled through the garret window and traced upon the ceiling long streaks of light and shade. Suddenly a carrier's waggon, heavily laden, trundled over the cobble-stones of the boulevard, and shook the old building like the rumbling of a tempest, jarring it from cellar to roof-tree.

"Yes, Madame!" cried Cosette, starting up out of sleep, "here I am! here I am!"

And she threw herself from the bed, her eyelids still half closed with the weight of slumber, stretching out her hand towards the corner of the wall.

"Oh! what shall I do? Where is my broom?" said she.

By this time her eyes were fully open, and she saw the smiling face of Jean Valjean.

"Oh! yes—so it is!" said the child. "Good-morning, Monsieur."

Children at once accept joy and happiness with quick familiarity, being themselves naturally all happiness and joy.

Cosette noticed Catherine at the foot of the bed, laid hold of her at once, and, playing the while, asked Jean Valjean a thousand questions—Where was she? Was Paris a big place? Was Madame Thenardier really very far away? Wouldn't she come back again, etc., etc. All at once she exclaimed, "How pretty it is here!"

It was a frightful hovel, but she felt free.

"Must I sweep?" she continued at length.

"Play!" replied Jean Valjean.

And thus the day passed by. Cosette, without troubling herself with trying to understand anything about it, was inexpressibly happy with her doll and her good friend.

Nature had placed a wide chasm—fifty years' interval of age—between Jean Valjean and Cosette. This chasm fate filled up. Fate abruptly brought together, and wedded with its

resistless power, these two shattered lives, dissimilar in years, but similar in sorrow. The one, indeed, was the complement of the other. The instinct of Cosette sought for a father, as the instinct of Jean Valjean sought for a child. To meet was to find one another. In that mysterious moment, when their hands touched, they were welded together. When their two souls saw each other, they recognised that they were mutually needed, and they closely embraced.

In the meanwhile, Jean Valjean had well chosen his hiding-place. He was there in a state of security that seemed to be complete.

The apartment with the side chamber which he occupied with Cosette was the one whose window looked out upon the boulevard. This window being the only one in the house, there were no neighbour's prying eyes to fear either from that side or opposite.

The lower floor of No. 50-52 was a sort of dilapidated shed; it served as a sort of stable for market gardeners, and had no communication with the upper floor. It was separated from it by the flooring, which had neither stairway nor trap-door and was, as it were, the diaphragm of the old building. The upper floor contained several rooms and a few lofts, only one of which was occupied—by an old woman, who was maid of all work to Jean Valjean. All the rest was uninhabited.

Weeks rolled by. These two beings led in that wretched shelter a happy life.

From the earliest dawn, Cosette laughed, prattled and sang. Children have their morning song, like birds.

Jean Valjean began to teach her to read. Sometimes, while teaching the child to spell, he would remember that it was with the intention of accomplishing evil that he had learned to read in the galleys. This intention had now been changed into teaching a child to read. Then the old convict would smile with the pensive smile of angels.

The old landlady, a crabbed creature, fully possessed with that keen observation as to all that concerned her neighbours, which is peculiar to the suburbs, watched Jean Valjean closely without exciting his suspicion. She was a little deaf, which made her talkative. She had questioned Cosette, who, knowing nothing, could tell nothing, further than that she came from Montfermeil. One morning this old female spy saw Jean Valjean go, with an appearance which seemed peculiar to the old busybody, into one of the uninhabited apartments of the building. She followed him with the steps of an old cat, and could see him without herself being seen, through the chink of the door directly opposite. Jean Valjean had, doubt-

less for greater caution, turned his back towards the door in question. The old woman saw him fumble in his pocket, and take from it a needle case, scissors and thread, and then proceed to rip open the lining of one lappel of his coat, and take from under it a piece of yellowish paper, which he unfolded. The beldame remarked with dismay, that it was a bank bill for a thousand francs. It was the second or third one only that she had ever seen. She ran away very much frightened.

A moment afterwards, Jean Valjean accosted her, and asked her to get this thousand-franc bill changed for him, adding that it was the half-yearly interest on his property which he had received on the previous day. "Where?" thought the old woman. He did not go out until six o'clock, and the Government treasury is certainly not open at that hour. The old woman got the note changed, all the while forming her conjectures. This bill of a thousand francs, commented upon and multiplied, gave rise to a host of breathless conferences among the gossips of the Rue des Vignes-Saint-Marcel.

Some days afterwards, it chanced that Jean Valjean, in his shirt-sleeves, was sawing wood in the entry. The old woman was in his room doing the chamberwork. She was alone. Cosette was intent upon the wood he was sawing. The old woman saw the coat hanging on a nail, and examined it. The lining had been sewed over. She felt it carefully and thought she could detect in the lappels and in the padding, thicknesses of paper. Other thousand-franc bills beyond a doubt!

She noticed, besides, that there were all sorts of things in the pockets. Not only were there the needles, scissors and thread, which she had already seen, but a large pocket-book, a very big knife, and, worst symptom of all, several wigs of different colours. Every pocket of this coat had the appearance of containing something to be provided with against sudden emergencies.

Thus, the occupants of the old building reached the closing days of winter.

CHAPTER XXIV

There was, in the neighbourhood of Saint Médard, a mendicant who sat crouching over the edge of a condemned public well nearby, and to whom Jean Valjean often gave alms. He never passed this man without giving him a few pennies. Sometimes he spoke to him. Those who were envious of this poor creature said he was in the pay of the police. He was

an old church beadle of seventy-five, who was always mumbling prayers.

One evening, as Valjean was passing that way, unaccompanied by Cosette, he noticed the beggar sitting in his usual place, under the street lamp which had just been lighted. The man, according to custom, seemed to be praying and was bent over. Jean Valjean walked up to him, and put a piece of money in his hand as usual. The beggar suddenly raised his eyes, gazed intently at Jean Valjean, and then quickly dropped his head. This movement was like a flash; Jean Valjean shuddered; it seemed to him that he had just seen, by the light of the street lamp, not the calm, sanctimonious face of the aged beadle, but a terrible and well-known countenance. He experienced the sensation one would feel on finding himself suddenly face to face, in the gloom, with a tiger. He recoiled, horror-stricken and petrified, daring neither to breathe nor to speak, to stay nor to fly, but gazing upon the beggar who had once more bent down his head, with its tattered covering, and seemed to be no longer conscious of his presence. At this singular moment, an instinct, perhaps the mysterious instinct of self-preservation, prevented Jean Valjean from uttering a word. The beggar had the same form, the same rags, the same general appearance as on every other day. "Pshaw!" said Jean Valjean to himself, "I am mad! I am dreaming! It cannot be!" And he went home, anxious and ill at ease.

He scarcely dared to admit, even to himself, that the countenance he thought he had seen was the face of Javert.

Some days after, it might be eight o'clock in the evening, he was in his room, giving Cosette her spelling lesson, which the child was repeating in a loud voice, when he heard the door of the building open and close again. That seemed odd to him. The old woman, the only occupant of the house besides himself and Cosette, always went to bed at dark to save candles. Jean Valjean made a sign to Cosette to be silent. He heard someone coming upstairs. Possibly, it might be the old woman who had felt unwell and had been to the druggist.

He sent Cosette to bed, telling her in a suppressed voice to lie down very quietly—and, as he kissed her forehead, the footsteps stopped. Jean Valjean remained silent and motionless, his back turned towards the door, still seated on his chair from which he had not moved, and holding his breath in the darkness. After a considerable interval, not hearing anything more, he turned round without making any noise, and as he raised his eyes towards the door of his room, he saw a light through the keyhole. This ray of light was an evil star in the black background of the door and the wall. There was, evi-

dently, somebody outside with a candle who was listening.

A few minutes elapsed, and the light disappeared. But he heard no sound of footsteps, which seemed to indicate that whoever was listening at the door had taken off his shoes.

Jean Valjean threw himself on his bed without undressing, but could not shut his eyes that night.

At daybreak, as he was sinking into slumber from fatigue, he was aroused again, by the creaking of the door of some room at the end of the hall, and then he heard the same footstep which had ascended the stairs on the preceding night. The step approached. He started from his bed and placed his eye to the keyhole, which was quite a large one, hoping to get a glimpse of the person, whoever it might be, who had made his way into the building in the night-time and had listened at his door. It was a man, indeed, who passed by Jean Valjean's room, this time without stopping. The hall was still too dark for him to make out his features; but when the man reached the stairs, a ray of light from without made his figure stand out like a profile, and Jean Valjean had a full view of his back. The man was tall, wore a long frock-coat, and had a cudgel under his arm. It was the redoubtable form of Javert.

It was evident that the man had entered by means of a key, as if at home. "Who, then, had given him the key, and what was the meaning of this?"

At seven in the morning, when the old lady came to clear up the rooms, Jean Valjean eyed her sharply, but asked her no questions. The good dame appeared as usual.

While she was doing her sweeping, she said:

"Perhaps Monsieur heard someone come in last night?"

At her age, and on that boulevard, eight in the evening is the very darkest of the night.

"Ah, yes, by the way, I did," he answered in the most natural tone. "Who was it?"

"It's a new lodger," said the old woman, "who has come into the house."

"And his name is——?"

"Well, I hardly recollect now. Dumont or Daumont—some such name as that."

"And what is he—this M. Daumont?"

The old woman studied him a moment through her little foxy eyes, and answered:

"He's a gentleman living on his income like you."

She may have intended nothing by this, but Jean Valjean thought he could make out that she did.

When the old woman was gone, he made a roll of a hundred

francs he had in a drawer and put it into his pocket. Do what he would to manage this so that the clinking of the silver should not be heard, a five-franc piece escaped his grasp and rolled jingling away over the floor.

At dusk he went to the street-door and looked carefully up and down the boulevard. No one was to be seen. The boulevard seemed to be utterly deserted. It is true that there might have been someone hidden behind a tree.

He went upstairs again.

"Come," said he to Cosette.

He took her by the hand and they both went out. He was determined not to enter Gorbeau House again. Like the animal hunted from his den, he was looking for a hole to hide in until he could find one to remain in.

As eleven o'clock struck in the tower of Saint Etienne du Mont, he crossed the Rue de Pontoise in front of the Bureau of the Commissary of Police, which is at No. 14. Some moments afterwards, the instinct of which we have already spoken made him turn his head. At this moment he saw distinctly—thanks to the Commissary's lamp which revealed them—three men following him quite near, pass one after another under this lamp on the dark side of the street. One of these men entered the passage leading to the Commissary's house. The one in advance appeared to him decidedly suspicious.

"Come, child!" said he to Cosette, and he made haste to get out of the Rue de Pontoise.

He made a circuit, went round the Arcade des Patriarches, and plunged into the Rue des Postes.

There was a square there, where the Collège Rollin now is, and from which branches off the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève.

The moon lighted up this square brightly. Jean Valjean concealed himself in a doorway, calculating that if these men were still following him, he could not fail to get a good view of them when they crossed this lighted space.

In fact, three minutes had not elapsed when the men appeared. There were now four of them; all were tall, dressed in long brown coats, with round hats, and great clubs in their hands. They were not less fearfully forbidding by their size and their large fists than by their stealthy tread in the darkness. One would have taken them for four spectres in citizen's dress.

They stopped in the centre of the square and formed a group like people consulting. They appeared undecided. The man who seemed to be the leader turned and energetically pointed in the direction in which Jean Valjean was; one of

the others seemed to insist with some obstinacy on the contrary direction. At the instant when the leader turned, the moon shone full in his face. Jean Valjean recognised Javert perfectly.

Uncertainty was at an end for Jean Valjean; happily, it still continued with these men. He took advantage of their hesitation; it was time lost for them, gained for him. He came out from the doorway in which he was concealed, and made his way into the Rue des Postes towards the region of the Jardin des Plantes. Cosette began to be tired; he took her in his arms, and carried her. There was nobody in the streets, and the lamps had not been lighted on account of the moon.

A little street, the Rue du Chemin-Vert Saint Antoine, opened between two wood-yards enclosed by walls. This street was narrow, obscure, and seemed made expressly for him. Before entering it, he looked back.

From the point where he was, he could see the whole length of the bridge of Austerlitz.

Four shadows, at that moment, entered upon the bridge.

Jean Valjean felt a shudder like that of the deer when he sees the hounds again upon his track.

He plunged forward rather than walked, hoping to find some side street by which to escape, and once more to elude his pursuers.

He came to a wall.

At this moment a muffled and regular sound began to make itself heard at some distance. Jean Valjean ventured to thrust his head a little way around the corner of the street. Seven or eight soldiers, formed in platoon, had just turned into the Rue Polonceau. He saw the gleam of their bayonets. They were coming towards him.

These soldiers, at whose head he distinguished the tall form of Javert, advanced slowly and with precaution. They stopped frequently. It was plain they were exploring all the recesses of the walls, and all the entrances of doors and alleys.

It was—and here conjecture could not be deceived—some patrol which Javert had met and which he had put in requisition.

Javert's two assistants marched in the ranks.

At the rate at which they were marching, and with the stops they were making, it would take them about a quarter of an hour to arrive at the spot where Jean Valjean was. It was a frightful moment. A few minutes separated Jean Valjean from that awful precipice which was opening before him for the third time. And the galleys now were no longer simply the

galleys; they were Cosette lost for ever—that is to say, a life in death.

There was now only one thing possible.

Among other resources, thanks to his numerous escapes from the galleys at Toulon, he had become master of the incredible art of raising himself, in the right angle of a wall if need be, to the height of a sixth story; an art without ladders or props, by mere muscular strength, supporting himself by the back of his neck, his shoulders, his hips, and his knees, hardly making use of the few projections of the stone.

Jean Valjean measured with his eyes the wall, above which he saw the lime tree. It was about eighteen feet high. The angle that it made with the gable of the great building was filled in its lower part with a pile of masonry of triangular shape, probably intended to preserve the too convenient recess from a too public use. This preventive filling-up of the corners of a wall is very common in Paris.

This pile was about five feet high. From its top the space to climb to get upon the wall was hardly more than fourteen feet.

The wall was capped by a flat stone without any projection.

The difficulty was Cosette. Cosette did not know how to scale a wall. Abandon her? Jean Valjean did not think of it.

All extreme situations have their flashes which sometimes make us blind, sometimes illuminate us.

The despairing gaze of Jean Valjean encountered the lamp-post in the cul-de-sac Genrot.

At this epoch there were no gaslights in the streets of Paris. At nightfall they lighted the street lamps, which were placed at intervals, and were raised and lowered by means of a rope traversing the street from end to end, running through the grooves of posts. The reel on which this rope was wound was enclosed below the lantern in a little iron box, the key of which was kept by the lamplighter, and the rope itself was protected by a casing of metal.

Jean Valjean, with the energy of a final struggle, crossed the street at a bound, entered the cul-de-sac, sprang the bolt of the little box with the point of his knife, and an instant after was back at the side of Cosette. He had a rope. These desperate inventors of expedients, in their struggles with fatality, move electrically in case of need.

Then, without any haste, but without doing anything a second time, with a firm and rapid precision, so much the more remarkable at such a moment when the patrol and Javert might come upon him at any instant, he took off his cravat,

passed it around Cosette's body under the arms, taking care that it should not hurt the child, attached this cravat to an end of the rope by means of the knot which seamen call a swallow-knot, took the other end of the rope in his teeth, took off his shoes and stockings and threw them over the wall, climbed upon the pile of masonry and began to raise himself in the angle of the wall and the gable with as much solidity and certainty as if he had the rounds of a ladder under his heels and his elbows. Half a minute had not passed before he was on his knees on the wall.

Cosette watched him, stupefied, without saying a word.

All at once, she heard Jean Valjean's voice calling to her in a low whisper:

"Put your back against the wall."

She obeyed.

"Don't speak, and don't be afraid," added Jean Valjean.

And she felt herself lifted from the ground.

Before she had time to think where she was she was at the top of the wall.

Jean Valjean seized her, put her on his back, took her two little hands in his left hand, lay down flat and crawled along the top of the wall as far as the cut-off corner. As he had supposed, there was a building there, the roof of which sloped from the top of the wooden casing we have mentioned very nearly to the ground, with a gentle inclination, and just reaching to the lime tree.

A fortunate circumstance, for the wall was much higher on this side than on the street. Jean Valjean saw the ground beneath him at a great depth.

He had just reached the inclined plane of the roof, and had not yet left the crest of the wall, when a violent uproar proclaimed the arrival of the patrol. He heard the thundering voice of Javert:

"Search the cul-de-sac! The Rue Droit-Mur is guarded, the Petit Rue Picpus also. I'll answer for it he is in the cul-de-sac."

Jean Valjean slid down the roof, keeping hold of Cosette, reached the lime tree, and jumped to the ground. He found himself in a sort of garden, very large and of a singular appearance; one of those gloomy gardens which seem made to be seen in the winter and at night. On one side the building, down the roof of which he had come, was a wood-pile, and behind the wood, against the wall, a stone statue, the mutilated face of which was now nothing but a shapeless mask which was seen dimly through the obscurity.

The building was in ruins, but some dismantled rooms

could be distinguished in it, one of which was well filled, and appeared to serve as a shed.

Jean Valjean's first care had been to find his shoes, and put them on; then he entered the shed with Cosette. A man trying to escape never thinks himself sufficiently concealed. The child, thinking constantly of the Thenardiess, shared his instinct, and cowered down as closely as she could.

Cosette trembled, and pressed closely to his side. They heard the tumultuous clamour of the patrol ransacking the cul-de-sac and the street, the clatter of their muskets against the stones, the calls of Javert to the watchman he had stationed, and his imprecations mingled with words which they could not distinguish.

At the end of a quarter of an hour it seemed as though this stormy rumbling began to recede. Jean Valjean did not breathe.

He had placed his hand gently upon Cosette's mouth.

But the solitude about him was so strangely calm that that frightful din, so furious and so near, did not even cast over it a shadow of disturbance. It seemed as if these walls were built of the deaf stones spoken of in Scripture.

Suddenly, in the midst of this deep calm, a new sound arose; a celestial, divine, ineffable sound, as ravishing as the other was horrible. It was a hymn which came forth from the darkness, a bewildering mingling of prayer and harmony in the obscure and fearful silence of the night; voices of women, but voices with the pure accents of virgins and artless accents of children.

The chant ceased. Perhaps it had lasted a long time. Jean Valjean could not have told. Hours of ecstacy are never more than a moment.

All had again relapsed into silence. The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, the wind freshened every moment. The goodman took off his coat and wrapped Cosette in it.

"Are you warmer, so?"

"Oh! yes, father!"

"Well, wait here a moment for me. I shall soon be back."

He went out of the ruin, and along by the large building, in search of some better shelter. He found doors, but they were all closed. All the windows of the ground-floor were barred.

He went back to Cosette. She was sleeping. He sat down near her and looked at her. Little by little, as he beheld her, he grew calm, and regained possession of his clearness of mind.

He plainly perceived this truth, the basis of his life henceforth, that so long as she should be alive, so long as he should

have her with him, he should need nothing except for her, and fear nothing save on her account. He did not even realise that he was very cold, having taken off his coat to cover her.

Meanwhile, through the reverie into which he had fallen, he had heard for some time a singular noise. It sounded like a little bell that someone was shaking. This noise was in the garden. It was heard distinctly, though feebly. It resembled the dimly heard tinkling of cow-bells in the pastures at night.

This noise made Jean Valjean turn.

He looked, and saw that there was someone in the garden.

Something which resembled a man was walking among the glass cases of the melon patch, rising up, stooping down, stopping, with a regular motion, as if he were drawing or stretching something upon the ground. This being appeared to limp.

Jean Valjean shuddered with the continual tremor of the outcast. Then he walked straight to the man. He had taken in his hand the roll of money which was in his vest-pocket.

This man had his head down, and did not see him coming. A few strides, Jean Valjean was at his side.

Jean Valjean approached him, exclaiming:

"A hundred francs!"

The man started and raised his eyes.

"A hundred francs for you," continued Jean Valjean, "if you will give me refuge to-night."

The moon shone full in Jean Valjean's bewildered face.

"What, it is you, Father Madeleine!" said the man.

This name, thus pronounced, at this dark hour, in this unknown place, by this unknown man, made Jean Valjean start back.

He was ready for anything but that. The speaker was an old man, bent and lame, dressed much like a peasant, who had on his left knee a leather knee-cap, from which hung a bell. His face was in the shade, and could not be distinguished.

Meanwhile the goodman had taken off his cap, and was exclaiming, tremulously:

"Ah! my God! how did you come here, Father Madeleine? How did you get in? O Lord!"

"Who are you? and what is this house!" asked Jean Valjean.

"Oh! indeed, that is good now," exclaimed the old man.

"I am the one you got the place for here, and this house is the one you got me the place in. What! you don't remember me?"

"No," said Jean Valjean. "And how does it happen that you know me?"

"You saved my life," said the man.

He turned, a ray of the moon lighted up his side face, and Jean Valjean recognised old Fauchelevent.

"Ah!" said Jean Valjean, "it is you; yes, I remember you. And what are you doing here?"

"Oh! I am covering my melons. I said to myself: the moon is bright; there is going to be a frost. Suppose I put their jackets on my melons? And," added he, looking at Jean Valjean, with a loud laugh, "you would have done well to do as much for yourself; but how did you come here?"

Jean Valjean, finding that he was known by this man, at least, under his name of Madeleine, went no further with his precautions. He multiplied questions.

"And what is this bell you have on your knee?"

"That!" answered Fauchelevent, "that is so that they may keep away from me."

"How! keep away from you?"

Old Fauchelevent winked in an indescribable manner.

"Ah! Bless me! there's nothing but women in this house; plenty of young girls. It seems that I am dangerous to meet. The bell warns them. When I come they go away."

"What is this house?"

"Why, you got me this place here as gardener."

"Answer me as if I didn't know."

"Well, it is the Convent of the Petit Picpus, then."

Jean Valjean remembered. Chance, that is to say, Providence, had thrown him precisely into this convent of the Quartier Saint Antoine, to which old Fauchelevent, crippled by his fall from his cart, had been admitted, upon his recommendation, two years before. He approached the old man, and said to him in a grave voice:

"Father Fauchelevent, I saved your life. You can now do for me what I once did for you."

Fauchelevent grasped in his old wrinkled and trembling hands the robust hands of Jean Valjean, and it was some seconds before he could speak. At last he exclaimed:

"Oh! that would be a blessing of God if I could do something for you in return for that! I save your life! Monsieur Mayor, the old man is at your disposal."

He said not a word more, but followed Jean Valjean as a dog follows his master.

In half an hour Cosette, again become rosy before a good fire, was asleep in the old gardener's bed. Jean Valjean had put on his cravat and coat; his hat, which he had thrown over the wall, had been found and brought in. While Jean Valjean was putting on his coat, Fauchelevent had taken off his knee-

cap with the bell attached, which now, hanging on a nail near a shutter, decorated the wall. The two men were warming themselves, with their elbows on the table, on which Fauchelevent had set a piece of cheese, some brown bread, a bottle of wine, and two glasses, and the old man said to Jean Valjean, putting his hand on his knee:

"Ah! Father Madeleine! you didn't know me at first? You save people's lives and then you forget them? Oh! that's bad; they remember you. You are ungrateful!"

CHAPTER XXV

The events, the reverse of which, so to speak, we have just seen, had been brought about under the simplest conditions.

When Jean Valjean, on the night of the very day that Javert arrested him at the death-bed of Fantine, escaped from the municipal prison of M—— sur M——, the police supposed that the escaped convict would start for Paris. Paris is a maelstrom in which everything is lost; and everything disappears in this whirlpool of the world as in the whirlpool of the sea. No forest conceals a man like this multitude. Fugitives of all kinds know this. They go to Paris to be swallowed up; there are swallowings-up which save. The police know it also, and it is in Paris that they search for what they have lost elsewhere. They searched there for the ex-mayor of M—— sur M——. Javert was summoned to Paris to aid in the investigation. Javert, in fact, was of great aid in the recapture of Jean Valjean. The zeal and intelligence of Javert on this occasion were remarked by M. Chabouillet, Secretary of the Prefecture, under Count Angles. M. Chabouillet, who had already interested himself in Javert, secured the transfer of the inspector of M—— sur M—— to the Police of Paris. There Javert rendered himself in various ways and, let us say, although the word seems unusual for such service, honourably, useful.

He thought no more of Jean Valjean—with these hounds always upon the scent, the wolf of to-day banishes the memory of the wolf of yesterday—when, in December, 1823, he read a newspaper, he who never read the newspapers; but Javert, as a monarchist, made a point of knowing the details of the triumphal entry of the "Prince generalissimo" into Bayonne. Just as he finished the article which interested him, a name—the name of Jean Valjean—at the bottom of the page attracted his attention. The newspaper announced that the convict Jean Valjean was dead, and published the fact in terms

so explicit, that Javert had no doubt of it. He merely said: "That settles it." Then he threw aside the paper.

He had begun to forget all this story, when, in the month of March, 1824, he heard an odd person spoken of who lived in the parish of Saint-Médard, and who was called "the beggar who gives alms." This person was, it was said, a man living on his income, whose name nobody knew exactly, and who lived alone with a little girl eight years old, who knew nothing of herself except that she came from Montfermeil. Montfermeil? This name, constantly recurring, excited Javert's attention anew. An old begging police spy, formerly a beadle, to whom this person had extended his charity, added some other details. "This man was very unsociable, never going out except at night, speaking to nobody, except to the poor sometimes, and allowing nobody to get acquainted with him. He wore a horrible old yellow coat which was worth millions, being lined all over with bank bills." This decidedly piqued Javert's curiosity. That he might get a near view of this fantastic rich man without frightening him away, he borrowed one day of the beadle his old frock, and the place where the old spy squatted every night droning out his orisons and playing the spy as he prayed.

He followed the old man to Gorbeau House, and set "the old woman" talking, which was not at all difficult. The old woman confirmed the story of the coat lined with millions, and related to him the episode of the thousand-franc note. She had seen it! She had touched it. Javert hired a room. That very night he installed himself in it. He listened at the door of the mysterious lodger, hoping to hear the sound of his voice, but Jean Valjean perceived his candle through the key-hole and balked the spy by keeping silence.

The next day Jean Valjean decamped. But the noise of the five-franc piece which he dropped was noticed by the old woman, who, hearing money moving, suspected that he was going to move, and hastened to forewarn Javert. At night, when Jean Valjean went out, Javert was waiting for him behind the trees of the boulevard with two men.

Javert had followed Jean Valjean from tree to tree, then from street-corner to street-corner, and had not lost sight of him a single instant; even in the moments when Jean Valjean felt himself most secure, the eye of Javert was upon him. Why did not Javert arrest Jean Valjean? Because he was still in doubt.

It was not until quite late, in the Rue de Pontoise, that, thanks to the bright light which streamed from a bar-room, he decidedly recognised Jean Valjean.

There are in his world two beings who can be deeply thrilled: the mother who finds her child, and the tiger who finds his prey. Javert felt this profound thrill.

When he reached the centre of the web, the fly was no longer there. The first thing that he saw was the displacement of the lamp, the rope of which was cut. Precious indication, which led him astray, however, by directing all his researches towards the cul-de-sac Genrot. There are in that cul-de-sac some rather low walls which face upon gardens the limits of which extend to some very large uncultivated grounds. Jean Valjean evidently must have fled that way. The fact is, that if he had penetrated into the cul-de-sac Genrot a little further, he would have done so, and would have been lost. Javert explored these gardens and these grounds as if he were searching for a needle.

At daybreak, he left two intelligent men on the watch, and returned to the Prefecture of the Police, crestfallen as a spy who has been caught by a thief.

CHAPTER XXVI

The convent which, in 1824, had existed for long years in the Petit Rue Picpus, was a community of Bernardines of the Obedience of Martin Verga.

During the six years which separate 1819 from 1825, the prioress of the Petit Picpus was Mademoiselle De Blemeur, whose religious name was Mother Innocent. She was a woman of about sixty, short, fat, but an excellent woman, the only one who was cheerful in the whole convent, and on that account adored.

Into this house it was that Jean Valjean had, as Fauchelevant said, "fallen from heaven."

At daybreak, having dreamed enormously, old Fauchelevant opened his eyes and saw Monsieur Madeleine who, seated upon his bunch of straw, was looking at Cosette as she slept. Fauchelevant half arose, and said:

"Now that you are here, how are you going to manage to come in?"

This question summed up the situation, and awakened Jean Valjean from his reverie.

The two men took counsel.

"To begin with," said Fauchelevant, "you will not set foot outside of this room, neither the little girl nor you. One step in the garden, we are ruined. Those cherubs are little devils."

"Who?" asked Jean Valjean.

"The little girls. You would be found out very soon. They would cry, 'What! a man!' But there is no danger to-day. There will be no recreation. The day will be all prayers. You hear the bell. As I told you, a stroke every minute. It is the knell."

"I understand, Father Fauchelevent. There are boarding scholars."

And Jean Valjean thought within himself:

"Here, then, Cosette can be educated, too."

Fauchelevent exclaimed:

"Zounds! they are the little girls for you! And how they would scream at sight of you! and how they would run! Your little one is asleep yet. What is her name?"

"Cosette."

"She is your girl? that is to say, you should be her grandfather?"

"Yes."

"I will leave her as soon as I can with a good old friend of mine, a fruiteress, in the Rue du Chemin Vert, who is deaf, and who has a little bed. I will scream into the fruiteress' ear, that she is my niece, and she must keep her for me till to-morrow. Then the little girl will come back again. It must be done."

A ray of the rising sun beamed upon the face of the sleeping Cosette, who half opened her mouth dreamily, seeming like an angel drinking in the light. Jean Valjean was looking at her. He no longer heard Fauchelevent.

A bell rang out. Fauchelevent quickly took down the knee-piece and bell from the nail, and buckled it on his knee.

"This time it is for me. The mother prioress wants me. Well! I am pricking myself with the tongue on my buckle. Monsieur Madeleine, do not stir, but wait for me. There is something new. If you are hungry, there is the wine, and bread and cheese."

And he went out of the hut, saying: "I am coming, I am coming."

Jean Valjean saw him hasten across the garden, as fast as his crooked leg would let him, with side glances at his melons the while.

In less than ten minutes Father Fauchelevent, whose bell put the nuns to flight as he went along, rapped softly at a door, and a gentle voice answered—For ever, For ever! that is to say, Come in.

This door was that of the parlour allotted to the gardener for use when it was necessary to communicate with him. This parlour was near the hall of the chapter. The prioress, seated

in the only chair in the parlour, was waiting for Fauchelevant.

The gardener made a timid bow, and stopped at the threshold of the cell. The prioress, who was saying her rosary, raised her eyes and said :

"Ah! it is you, Father Fauvent."

This abbreviation had been adopted in the convent.

Fauchelevant again began his bow.

"Father Fauvent, I have called you."

"I am here, reverend mother."

"I wish to speak to you."

"And I, for my part," said Fauchelevant, with a boldness at which he was alarmed himself, "I have something to say to the most reverend mother."

The prioress looked at him.

"Well, what is it?"

The goodman, with the assurance of one who feels that he is appreciated, began before the reverend prioress a rustic harangue, quite diffuse and very profound. He spoke at length of his age, his infirmities, of the weight of years henceforth doubly heavy upon him, of the growing demands of his work, of the size of the garden, of the nights to be spent, like last night, for example, when he had to put awnings over the melons on account of the moon; and he finally ended with this: "that he had a brother—(the prioress gave a start)—a brother not young—(second start of the prioress, but a reassured start)—that if it was desired, this brother could come and live with him and help him; that he was an excellent gardener; that the community would get good services from him, better than his own; that, otherwise, if his brother were not admitted, as he, the oldest, felt that he was broken down, and unequal to the labour, he would be obliged to leave, though with much regret; and that his brother had a little girl that he would bring with him, who would be reared under God in the house, and who, perhaps—who knows?—would some day become a nun.

When he had finished, the prioress stopped the sliding of her rosary through her fingers, and said :

"Father Fauvent, I am satisfied with you; to-morrow bring your brother to me, and tell him to bring his daughter."

CHAPTER XXVII

Next day, in the depth of night, two men and a child stood in front of No. 62, Petit Rue Picpus. The elder of the men lifted the knocker and rapped.

Fauchelevant belonged to the convent, and knew all the passwords. Every door opened before him.

The prioress, rosary in hand, was awaiting them. A mother, with her veil down, stood near her. A modest taper lighted—or one might almost say, pretended to light—up the parlour.

The prioress scrutinised Jean Valjean. Nothing scans so carefully as a downcast eye.

Then she proceeded to question:

"You are the brother?"

"Yes, reverend mother," replied Fauchelevant.

"What is your name?"

Fauchelevant replied:

"Ultimus Fauchelevant."

He had, in reality, had a brother named Ultimus, who was dead.

The prioress looked at Cosette attentively, and then said, aside to the mother:

"She will be homely."

The two mothers talked together very low for a few minutes in a corner of the parlour, and then the prioress turned and said:

"Father Fauvent, you will have another knee-cap and bell. We need two, now."

So next morning, two little bells were heard tinkling in the garden, and the nuns could not keep from lifting a corner of their veils. They saw two men digging side by side, in the lower part of the garden, under the trees—Fauvent and another. Immense event! The silence was broken so far as to say:

"It's an assistant gardener!"

The mothers added:

"He is Father Fauvent's brother."

In fact, Jean Valjean was regularly installed. He had the leather knee-cap and the bell; henceforth he had his commission. His name was Ultimus Fauchelevant.

The strongest recommendation of Cosette's admission had been the remark of the prioress: "She will be homely."

The prioress having uttered this prediction, immediately took Cosette into her friendship and gave her a place in the school building as a charity pupil.

The convent was to Jean Valjean like an island surrounded by wide waters. These four walls were, henceforth, the world to him. Within them he could see enough of the sky to be calm, and enough of Cosette to be happy.

Several years passed thus. Cosette was growing.

PART II: THE BARRICADES

About eight or nine years after the events previously narrated, there was seen, on the Boulevard du Temple, and in the neighbourhood of the Château d'Eau, a little boy of eleven or twelve years, who would have realised with considerable accuracy the ideal of the *gamin*, if, with the laughter of his youth upon his lips, his heart had not been absolutely dark and empty. This child was well muffled up in a man's pair of pantaloons, but he had not got them from his father, and in a woman's chemise, which was not an inheritance from his mother. Strangers had clothed him in these rags out of charity. Still, he had a father and a mother. But his father never thought of him, and his mother did not love him. He was one of those children so deserving of pity from all, who have fathers and mothers, and yet are orphans.

However, deserted as this lad was, it happened sometimes, every two or three months, that he would say to himself, "Come, I'll go and see my mother!" Then he would leave the boulevard, the Cirque, the Porte Saint Martin, go down along the quays, cross the bridges, reach the suburbs, walk as far as the Salpêtrière, and arrive—where? Precisely at that double number, 50-52, which is known to the reader, the Gorbeau building.

The "landlady" of the time of Jean Valjean was dead, and had been replaced by another exactly like her. I do not remember what philosopher it was who said: "There is never any lack of old women."

The new old woman was called Madame Burgon, and her life had been remarkable for nothing except a dynasty of three paroquets, which had in succession wielded the sceptre of her affections.

Among those who lived in the building, the wretchedest of all were a family of four persons, father, mother, and two daughters nearly grown, all four lodging in the same garret room, one of those cells of which we have already spoken.

This family at first sight presented nothing very peculiar but its extreme destitution; the father, in renting the room, had given his name as Jondrette. Some time after his moving in, which had singularly resembled, to borrow the memorable expression of the landlady, the entrance of nothing at all, this Jondrette said to the old woman, who, like her predecessor, was, at the same time, portress and swept the stairs: "Mother So-and-So, if anybody should come and ask for a Pole or an Italian or, perhaps, a Spaniard, that is for me."

Now, this family was the family of our sprightly, little bare-footed urchin. When he came there, he found distress and, what is sadder still, no smile; a cold hearthstone and cold hearts. When he came in, they would ask: "Where have you come from?" He would answer: "From the street." When he was going away they would ask him: "Where are you going to?" He would answer: "Into the street." His mother would say to him: "What have you come here for?"

The child lived, in this absence of affection, like those pale plants that spring up in cellars. He felt no suffering from this mode of existence, and bore no ill-will to anybody. He did not know how a father and mother ought to be.

But yet his mother loved his sisters.

We had forgotten to say that on the Boulevard du Temple this boy went by the name of little Gavroche. Why was his name Gavroche? Probably because his father's name was Jondrette.

To break all links seems to be the instinct of some wretched families.

The room occupied by the Jondrettes in the Gorbeau tenement was the last at the end of the hall. The adjoining cell was tenanted by a very poor young man who was called Monsieur Marius.

Let us see who and what Monsieur Marius was.

CHAPTER I

In the Rue Boucherat, Rue de Normandie, and Rue de Saintonge, there still remain a few old inhabitants who preserve a memory of a fine old man named M. Gillenormand, and who like to talk about him. M. Gillenormand, who was as much alive as any man can be, in 1831, was one of those men who have become curiosities simply because they have lived a long time; and who are strange because formerly they were like everybody else, and now they are no longer like anybody else. He was a peculiar man, and very truly a man of another age—the genuine bourgeois of the eighteenth century, a very perfect specimen, a little haughty, wearing his good old bourgeoisie as marquises wear their marquises. He had passed his ninetieth year, walked erect, spoke in a loud voice, saw clearly, drank hard, ate, slept and snored. He was superficial, hasty, easily angered. He got into a rage on all occasions, most frequently when most unseasonable. When anybody contradicted him he raised his

cane; he beat his servants as in the time of Louis XIV. He had an unmarried daughter over fifty years old, whom he belaboured severely when he was angry, and whom he would gladly have horsewhipped. She seemed to him about eight years old. He cuffed his domestics vigorously and would say: "Ah! slut!" One of his oaths was: "By the big slippers of big slipperdom!"

He lived in the Marais, Rue des Filles de Calvaire, No. 6. The house was his own. He had had two wives; by the first a daughter, who had remained unmarried, and by the second another daughter, who died when about thirty years old, and who had married for love, or luck, or otherwise, a soldier of fortune, who had served in the armies of the Republic and the Empire, had won the cross at Austerlitz, and been made colonel at Waterloo. "This is the disgrace of my family," said the old bourgeois.

Mademoiselle Gillenormand kept her father's house. There was besides in the house between this old maid and this old man, a child, a little boy, always trembling and mute before M. Gillenormand. M. Gillenormand never spoke to this child but with stern voice, and sometimes with uplifted cane: "Here! Monsieur—rascal, blackguard, come here! Answer me, rogue! Let me see you, scapegrace!" etc., etc. He idolised him.

It was his grandson—a beautiful boy of seven, white, rosy, fresh-looking, with happy and trustful eyes, who never appeared in the salons without hearing a buzz about him: "How pretty he is! What a pity! poor child!" They called him "poor child" because his father was "a brigand of the Loire."

This brigand of the Loire was M. Gillenormand's son-in-law, already mentioned, and whom M. Gillenormand called "the disgrace of his family".

Whoever, at that day, had passed through the little city of Vernon, and walked over that beautiful monumental bridge which will be very soon replaced, let us hope, by some horrid wire bridge, would have noticed, as his glance fell from the top of the parapet a man of about fifty, with a leather casque on his head, dressed in pantaloons and waistcoat of coarse grey cloth. He was timid—so much so as to seem unsociable; he rarely went out, and saw nobody but the poor who rapped at his window, and his curé, Abbé Mabeuf, a good old man. Still, if any of the inhabitants of the city, or strangers, whoever they might be, curious to see his tulips and roses, knocked at his little house, he opened his door with a smile. This was the brigand of the Loire.

Whoever, at the same time, had read the military memoirs,

the biographies, the *Moniteur*, and the bulletins of the Grand Army, would have been struck by a name which appears rather often—the name of George Pontmercy. He accompanied Napoleon to the island of Elba. At Waterloo he led a squadron of cuirassiers in Dubois' brigade. He it was who took the colours from the Lunenburg battalion. He carried the colours to the Emperor's feet. He was covered with blood. He had received, in seizing the colours, a sabre stroke across his face. The Emperor, well pleased, cried to him: "You are a colonel, you are a baron, you are an officer of the Legion of Honour!" Pontmercy answered: "Sire, I thank you for my widow." An hour afterwards he fell in the ravine of Ohain. Now who was this George Pontmercy? He was that very brigand of the Loire.

We have already seen something of his history. After Waterloo, Pontmercy, drawn out by Thénardier, as will be remembered, from the sunken road of Ohain, succeeded in regaining the army, and was passed along from ambulance to ambulance to the cantonments of the Loire.

The Restoration put him on half-pay, then sent him to a residence, that is to say, under surveillance at Vernon. The king, Louis XVIII., ignoring all that had been done in the Hundred Days, recognised neither his position of officer of the Legion of Honour, nor his rank of colonel, nor his title of baron. He, on his part, neglected no opportunity to sign himself "Colonel Baron Pontmercy". He had only one old blue coat, and he never went out without putting on the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honour. The *procureur du roi* notified him that he would be prosecuted for "illegally" wearing this decoration. When his notice was given to him by a friendly intermediary, Pontmercy answered with a bitter smile: "I do not know whether it is that I no longer understand French, or you no longer speak it: but the fact is, I do not understand you." Then he went out every day for a week with his rosette. Nobody dared to disturb him. Two or three times the Minister of War or the general commanding the department wrote to him with this address: "Monsieur Commandant Pontmercy." He returned the letters unopened. At the same time, Napoleon at St. Helena was treating Sir Hudson Lowe's missives addressed to "General Bonaparte" in the same way. Pontmercy at last, excuse the word, came to have in his mouth the same saliva as his emperor.

So, too, there were in Rome a few Carthaginian soldiers, taken prisoners, who refused to bow to Flaminius, and who had a little of Hannibal's soul.

One morning he met the *procureur du roi* in one of the

streets of Vernon, went up to him and said: "Monsieur *procureur du roi*, am I allowed to wear my scar?"

He had nothing but his very scanty half-pay as chief of squadron. He hired the smallest house he could find in Vernon. He lived there alone, how we have just seen. Under the Empire, between two wars, he had found time to marry Mademoiselle Gillenormand. The old bourgeois, who really felt outraged, consented with a sigh, saying: "The greatest families are forced to it." In 1815, Madame Pontmercy, an admirable woman in every respect, noble and rare, and worthy of her husband, died, leaving a child. This child would have been the colonel's joy in his solitude; but the grandfather had imperiously demanded his grandson, declaring that, unless he were given up to him, he would disinherit him. The father yielded for the sake of the little boy, and not being able to have his child he set about loving flowers.

M. Gillenormand had no intercourse with his son-in-law. The colonel was to him "a bandit", and he was to the colonel "a blockhead". M. Gillenormand never spoke of the colonel unless sometimes to make mocking allusions to "his barony". It was expressly understood that Pontmercy should never endeavour to see his son or to speak to him, under pain of the boy being turned away and disinherited. To the Gillenormands Pontmercy was pestiferous. They intended to bring up the child to their liking. The colonel did wrong, perhaps, to accept these conditions, but he submitted to them thinking that he was doing right and sacrificing himself alone.

The inheritance from the grandfather Gillenormand was a small affair, but the inheritance from Mlle. Gillenormand the elder was considerable. This aunt, who had remained single, was very rich from the maternal side, and the son of her sister was her natural heir. The child, whose name was Marius, knew that he had a father, but nothing more. Nobody spoke a word to him about him. However, in the society into which his grandfather took him, the whisperings, the hints, the winks, enlightened the little boy's mind at length; he finally comprehended something of it, and as he naturally imbibed, by a sort of infiltration and slow penetration, the ideas and opinions which formed, so to say, the air he breathed, he came little by little to think of his father only with shame and with a closed heart.

While he was thus growing up, every two or three months the colonel would escape, come furtively to Paris like a fugitive from justice breaking his ban, and go to Saint Sulpice, at the hour when Aunt Gillenormand took Marius to mass. There,

trembling lest the aunt should turn round, concealed behind a pillar, motionless, not daring to breathe, he saw his child. The scarred veteran was afraid of the old maid.

From this, in fact, came his connection with the curé of Vernon, Abbé Mabeuf.

This worthy priest was the brother of a warden of Saint Sulpice, who had several times noticed this man gazing upon his child, and the scar on his cheek and the big tear in his eyes. This man, who had so really the appearance of a man, and who wept like a woman, had attracted the warden's attention. This face remained in his memory. One day, having gone to Vernon to see his brother, he met Colonel Pontmercy on the bridge, and recognised the man of Saint Sulpice. The warden spoke of it to the curé, and the two, under some pretext, made the colonel a visit. This visit led to others. The colonel, who at first was very reserved, finally unbosomed himself, and the curé and the warden came to know the whole story, and how Pontmercy was sacrificing his own happiness to the future of his child. The result was that the curé felt a veneration and tenderness for him, and the colonel, on his part, felt an affection for the curé. And, moreover, when it happens that both are sincere and good, nothing will mix and amalgamate more easily than an old priest and an old soldier. In reality they are the same kind of man. One has devoted himself to his country upon earth, the other to his country in heaven; there is no other difference.

Twice a year, on the first of January and on St. George's day, Marius wrote filial letters to his father, which his aunt dictated, and which, one would have said, were copied from some Complete Letter Writer: this was all that M. Gillenormand allowed; and the father answered with very tender letters, which the grandfather thrust into his pocket without reading.

Marius Pontmercy went, like all children, through various studies. When he left the hands of Aunt Gillenormand, his grandfather entrusted him to a worthy professor, of the purest classic innocence. This young, unfolding soul passed from a prude to a pedant. Marius had his years at college, then he entered the law-school. He was royalist, fanatical and austere. He had little love for his grandfather, whose gaiety and cynicism wounded him, and the place of his father was a dark void.

For the rest, he was an ardent but cool lad, noble, generous, proud, religious, lofty; honourable even to harshness, pure even to unsociableness.

CHAPTER II

In 1827, Marius had just attained his eighteenth year. On coming in one evening, he saw his grandfather with a letter in his hand.

"Marius," said M. Gillenormand, "you will set out to-morrow for Vernon."

"What for?" said Marius.

"To see your father."

Marius shuddered. He had thought of everything but this, that a day might come when he would have to see his father. Feeling that he was not loved at all, he had no love. Nothing more natural, said he to himself.

The grandfather continued: "It appears that he is sick. He asks for you. Start to-morrow morning. I think there is at the Cour des Fontaines a conveyance which starts at six o'clock and arrives at night. Take it. He says the case is urgent."

The next day, at dusk, Marius arrived at Vernon. Candles were just beginning to be lighted. He asked the first person he met for the "house of Monsieur Pontmercy." For in his feelings he agreed with the Restoration, and he too recognised his father neither as baron nor as colonel.

The house was pointed out to him. He rang: a woman, came and opened the door with a small lamp in her hand.

"Monsieur Pontmercy?" said Marius.

The woman remained motionless.

"Is it here?" asked Marius.

The woman gave an affirmative nod of the head.

"Can I speak with him?"

The woman gave a negative sign.

"But I am his son!" resumed Marius. "He is expecting me."

"He expects you no longer," said the woman.

Then he perceived that she was in tears.

She pointed to the door of a low room; he entered.

In this room, which was lighted by a tallow candle on the mantel, there were three men, one of them standing, one on his knees, and one stripped to his shirt and lying at full length upon the floor. The one upon the floor was the colonel.

The two others were a physician and a priest, who was praying.

The colonel had been three days before attacked with a brain fever. At the beginning of the sickness, having a pre-

sentiment of ill, he had written to Monsieur Gillenormand to ask for his son. He had grown worse. On the very evening of Marius' arrival at Vernon, the colonel had had a fit of delirium; he sprang out of his bed in spite of the servant, crying: "My son has not come; I am going to meet him!" Then he had gone out of his room and fallen upon the floor of the hall. He had just died.

The doctor and the curé had been sent for. The doctor had come too late, the curé had come too late. The son also had come too late.

By the dim light of the candle they could distinguish upon the cheek of the pale and prostrate colonel a big tear which had fallen from his death-stricken eye. The eye was glazed, but the tear was not dry. This tear was for his son's delay.

Marius looked upon this man, whom he saw for the first time, and for the last—this venerable and manly face, these open eyes which saw not, this white hair, these robust limbs upon which he distinguished here and there brown lines, which were sabre-cuts, and a species of red stars, which were bullet-holes. He looked upon that gigantic scar which imprinted heroism upon his face, on which God had impressed goodness. He thought that this man was his father, and that this man was dead, and he remained unmoved.

The sorrow which he experienced was the sorrow which he would have felt before any other man whom he might have seen stretched out in death.

Mourning, bitter mourning, was in that room. The servant was lamenting by herself in a corner, the curé was praying, and his sobs were heard; the doctor was wiping his eyes; the corpse itself wept.

This doctor, this priest, and this woman looked at Marius through their affliction without saying a word; it was he who was the stranger. Marius, too little moved, felt ashamed and embarrassed at his attitude. He had his hat in his hand; he let it fall to the floor, to make them believe that grief deprived him of strength to hold it.

At the same time he felt something like remorse, and he despised himself for acting thus. But was it his fault? He did not love his father, indeed!

The colonel left nothing. The sale of his furniture hardly paid for his burial. The servant found a scrap of paper which she handed to Marius. It contained this, in the handwriting of the colonel:

"For my Son—The Emperor made me a baron upon the battle-field of Waterloo. Since the Restoration contests this title which I have bought with my blood, my son will take it

and bear it. I need not say that he will be worthy of it." On the back, the colonel added: "At this same battle of Waterloo, a serjeant saved my life. This man's name is Thenardier. Not long ago I believe he was keeping a little tavern in a village in the suburbs of Paris, at Chelles or at Montfermeil. If my son meets him, he will do Thenardier all the service he can."

Not from duty towards his father, but on account of that vague respect for death which is always so imperious in the heart of man, Marius took this paper and pressed it.

No trace remained of the Colonel. Monsieur Gillenormand had his sword and uniform sold to a second-hand dealer. The neighbours stripped the garden, and carried off the rare flowers. The other plants became briery and scraggy, and died.

Marius remained only forty-eight hours at Vernon. After the burial, he returned to Paris and went back to his law, thinking no more of his father than if he had never lived. In two days the colonel had been buried, and in three days forgotten.

Marius had preserved the religious habits of his childhood. One Sunday he had gone to hear mass at Saint Sulpice, at this same chapel of the Virgin to which his aunt took him when he was a little boy, and being that day more absent-minded and dreamy than usual, he took his place behind a pillar and knelt down, without noticing it, before a Utrecht velvet chair, on the back of which this name was written: "Monsieur Mabeuf, churchwarden." The mass had hardly commenced when an old man presented himself and said to Marius:

"Monsieur, this is my place."

Marius moved away readily, and the old man took his chair.

After mass, Marius remained absorbed in thought a few steps distant; the old man approached him again and said: "I beg your pardon, Monsieur, for having disturbed you a little while ago, and for disturbing you again now; but you must have thought me impertinent, and I must explain myself."

"Monsieur," said Marius, "it is unnecessary."

"Yes!" resumed the old man; "I do not wish you to have a bad opinion of me. You see I think a great deal of that place. It seems to me that the mass is better there. Why? I will tell you. To that place I have seen for ten years, regularly, every two or three months, a poor, brave father come, who had no other opportunity and no other way of seeing his child, being prevented through some family arrangements. The little one never suspected that his father was here. He did not even know, perhaps, that he had a father, the innocent boy!

The father, for his part, kept behind a pillar, so that nobody should see him. He looked at his child, and wept. This poor man worshipped this little boy. I saw that. This place has become sanctified, as it were, for me, and I have acquired the habit of coming here to hear mass. I was even acquainted slightly with this unfortunate gentleman. He had a father-in-law, a rich aunt, relatives, I do not remember exactly, who threatened to disinherit the child if he, the father, should see him. He had sacrificed himself that his son might some day be rich and happy. They were separated by political opinions. Certainly I approve of political opinions, but there are some people who do not know where to stop. Bless me! because a man was at Waterloo he is not a monster; a father is not separated from his child for that. He was one of Buonaparte's colonels. He is dead, I believe. He lived at Vernon, where my brother is curé, and his name is something like Pontmarie, or Montpercy. He had a handsome sabre cut."

"Pontmercy," said Marius, turning pale.

"Exactly; Pontmercy. Did you know him?"

"Monsieur," said Marius, "he was my father."

The old churchwarden clasped his hands, and exclaimed:

"Ah! you are the child! Yes, that is it; he ought to be a man now. Well! poor child, you can say that you had a father who loved you well."

Marius offered his arm to the old man, and walked with him to his house. Next day he said to Monsieur Gillenormand:

"We have arranged a hunting party with a few friends. Will you permit me to be absent for three days?"

"Four," answered the grandfather; "go; amuse yourself."

And, with a wink, he whispered to his daughter: "Some love affair!"

Marius was absent three days, then he returned to Paris, went straight to the library of the law-school, and asked for the file of the *Moniteur*.

He read the *Moniteur*; he read all the histories of the Republic and the Empire; he devoured everything. The first time he met his father's name in the bulletins of the Grand Army he had a fever for a whole week. He went to see the generals under whom George Pontmercy had served—among others, Count H——. The churchwarden Mabeuf, whom he had gone to see again, gave him an account of the life at Vernon, the Colonel's retreat, his flowers and his solitude. Marius came to understand fully this rare, sublime and gentle man, this sort of lion-lamb who was his father.

In the meantime, engrossed in this study, which took up all his time, as well as all his thoughts, he hardly saw the

Gillenormands more. The aunt grumbled. The grandfather smiled. "Poh, poh! it is the age for the lasses!" Sometimes the old man added: "The devil! I thought that it was some gallantry. It seems to be a passion."

It was a passion, indeed. Marius was on the way to adoration for his father.

At the same time an extraordinary change took place in his ideas.

The Republic, the Empire, had been to him, till then, nothing but monstrous words. The Republic, a guillotine in a twilight; the Empire, a sabre in the night. From childhood he had been imbued with the judgment of the party of 1814 in regard to Buonaparte. Now, all the prejudices of the Restoration, all its interests, all its instincts, tended to the disfigurement of Napoleon. It execrated him still more than it did Robespierre. It made skilful use of the fatigue of the nation and the hatred of mothers. Buonaparte had become a sort of monster almost fabulous, and to depict him to the imagination of the people, which, as we have already said, resembles the imagination of children, the party of 1814 presented in succession every terrifying mask, from that which is terrible while yet it is grand, to that which is terrible in the grotesque, from Tiberius to Bugaboo. Thus, in speaking of Buonaparte, you might either weep or burst with laughter, provided hatred was the basis. Marius had never had—about that man, as he was called—any other ideas in his mind. They had grown together with the tenacity of his nature. There was in him a complete little man who was devoted to hatred of Napoleon.

On reading his history, especially in studying it in documents and materials, the veil which covered Napoleon from Marius' eyes gradually fell away. He perceived something immense, and suspected that he had been deceiving himself up to that moment about Buonaparte as well as about everything else; each day he saw more clearly; and he began to mount slowly, step by step, in the beginning almost with regret, afterwards with rapture, and as if drawn by an irresistible fascination, at first the sombre stages, then the dimly lighted stages, finally the luminous and splendid stages of enthusiasm.

One night he was alone in his little room next the roof. His candle was lighted; he was reading, leaning on his table by the open window. All manner of reveries came over him from the expanse of space and mingled with his thoughts. What a spectacle is night! We hear dull sounds, not knowing whence they come; we see Jupiter, twelve hundred times larger than the earth, glistening like an ember, the welkin is black, the stars sparkle, it is terror-inspiring.

He was reading the bulletins of the Grand Army, those heroic strophes written on the battlefield; he saw there at intervals his father's name, the Emperor's name everywhere; the whole of the grand Empire appeared before him; he felt as if a tide were swelling and rising within him; it seemed to him at moments that his father was passing by him like a breath, and whispering in his ear; gradually he grew wandering; he thought he heard the drums, the cannon, the trumpets, the measured tread of the battalions, the dull and distant gallop of the cavalry; from time to time he lifted his eyes to the sky and saw the colossal constellations shining in the limitless abysses, then they fell back upon the book, and saw there other colossal things moving about confusedly. His heart was full. He was transported, trembling, breathless; suddenly, without himself knowing what moved him, or what he was obeying, he arose, stretched his arms out of the window, gazed fixedly into the gloom, the silence, the darkling infinite, the eternal immensity, and cried: *Vive l'empereur!*

From that moment it was all over: the Corsican Ogre—the usurper—the tyrant—the monster who was the lover of his sisters—the actor who took lessons from Talma—the poisoner of Jaffa—the tiger—Buonaparte—all this vanished, and gave place in his mind to a suffused and brilliant radiance in which shone out from an inaccessible height the pale marble phantom of Cæsar. The Emperor had been to his father only the beloved captain, whom one admires, and for whom one devotes himself; to Marius he was something more. Napoleon became to him the people-man as Jesus is the God-man.

All these revolutions were accomplished in him without a suspicion of it in his family.

When, in this mysterious labour, he had entirely cast off his old Bourbon and ultra skin, when he had shed the aristocrat, the Jacobite, and the royalist, when he was fully revolutionary, thoroughly democratic, and almost republican, he went to an engraver on the Quai des Orfèvres, and ordered a hundred cards bearing this name: "Baron Marius Pontmercy."

This was but a very logical consequence of the change which had taken place in him, a change in which everything gravitated about his father.

However, as he knew nobody, and could not leave his cards at anybody's door, he put them in his pocket.

By another natural consequence, in proportion as he drew nearer to his father, his memory, and the things for which the colonel had fought for twenty-five years, he drew off from his grandfather. As we have mentioned, for a long time M. Gillenormand's capriciousness had been disagreeable to him.

There was already between them all the distaste of a serious young man for a frivolous old man. Geront's gaiety shocks and exasperates Werther's melancholy. So long as the same political opinions and the same ideas had been common to them Marius had met M. Gillenormand by means of them as if upon a bridge. When this bridge fell, the abyss appeared. And then, above all, Marius felt inexpressibly revolted when he thought that M. Gillenormand, from stupid motives, had pitilessly torn him from the colonel, thus depriving the father of the child, and the child of the father.

Through affection and veneration for his father, Marius had almost reached aversion for his grandfather. Nothing of this, however, as we have said, was betrayed externally. Only he was more and more frigid; laconic at meals, and scarcely ever in the house. When his aunt scolded him for it, he was very mild, and gave as an excuse his studies, courts, examinations, dissertations, etc. The grandfather did not change his infallible diagnosis: "In love? I understand it."

Marius was absent for a while from time to time.

"Where can he go to?" asked the aunt.

On one of these journeys, which were always very short, he went to Montfermeil in obedience to the injunction which his father had left him, and sought for the former sergeant of Waterloo, the innkeeper Thenardier. Thenardier had failed, the inn was closed and nobody knew what had become of him. While making these researches, Marius was away from the house four days.

"Decidedly," said the grandfather, "he is going astray."

They thought they noticed that he wore something, upon his breast and under his shirt, hung from his neck by a black ribbon. And then one day when Marius was away from home M. Gillenormand entered the garret room.

The bed was not disturbed, and upon the bed were displayed without distrust the coat and the black ribbon.

"I like that better," said M. Gillenormand.

And a moment afterwards he entered the parlour where Mademoiselle Gillenormand the elder was already seated, embroidering her cab wheels.

The entrance was triumphal.

M. Gillenormand held in one hand the coat and in the other the neck ribbon, and cried:

"Victory! We are going to penetrate the mystery! we shall know the end of the end, we shall feel the libertinism of our trickster! here we are with the romance even. I have the portrait!"

In fact, a black shagreen box, much like to a medallion, was fastened to the ribbon.

The old man took this box and looked at it some time without opening it, with that air of desire, ravishment and anger, with which a poor, hungry devil sees an excellent dinner pass under his nose when it is not for him.

"For it is evidently a portrait. I know all about that. This is worn tenderly upon the heart. What fools they are! Some abominable quean, enough to make one shudder probably! Young folks have such bad taste in these days!"

"Let us see, father," said the old maid.

The box opened by pressing a spring. They found nothing in it but a piece of paper carefully folded.

"'From the same to the same,' said M. Gillenormand, bursting with laughter. "I know what that is. A love-letter!"

They unfolded the paper and read this:

"'For my son.'—The Emperor made me a baron upon the battle-field of Waterloo. Since the Restoration contests this title which I have bought with my blood, my son will take it and bear it. I need not say that he will be worthy of it."

The feelings of the father and daughter cannot be described. They felt chilled as by the breath of a death's head. They did not exchange a word. M. Gillenormand, however, said in a low voice, and as if talking to himself:

"It is the handwriting of that sabreur."

The aunt examined the paper, turned it on all sides, then put it back in the box.

Just at that moment, a little oblong package, wrapped in blue paper, fell from a pocket of the coat. Mademoiselle Gillenormand picked it up and unfolded the blue paper. It was Marius' hundred cards. She passed one of them to M. Gillenormand, who read: "Baron Marius Pontmercy."

The old man rang. Nicolette came. M. Gillenormand took the ribbon, the box and the coat, threw them all on the floor in the middle of the parlour, and said:

"Take away those things."

A full hour passed in complete silence. The old man and the old maid sat with their backs turned to one another, and were probably, each on their side, thinking over the same things. At the end of that hour, Aunt Gillenormand said:

"Pretty!"

A few minutes afterwards, Marius made his appearance. He came in. Even before crossing the threshold of the parlour, he perceived his grandfather, holding one of his cards in his hand, who, on seeing him, exclaimed with his crushing air of sneering bourgeois superiority:

"Stop! stop! stop! stop! stop! you are a baron now. I present you my compliments. What does this mean?"

Marius coloured slightly, and answered:

"It means that I am my father's son."

M. Gillenormand checked his laugh, and said harshly:

"Your father; I am your father."

"My father," resumed Marius with downcast eyes and stern manner, "was a humble and heroic man, who served the Republic and France gloriously, who was great in the greatest history that men have ever made, who lived a quarter of a century in the camp, by day under grape and under balls, by night in the snow, in the mud, and in the rain, who captured colours, who received twenty wounds, who died forgotten and abandoned, and who had but one fault; that was in loving too dearly two ingrates, his country and me."

This was more than M. Gillenormand could listen to. At the word "Republic," he rose, or, rather, sprang to his feet. Every one of the words which Marius had pronounced had produced the effect upon the old royalist's face of a blast from a bellows upon a burning coal. From dark he had become red, from red purple, and from purple glowing.

"Marius!" exclaimed he, "abominable child! I don't know what your father was! I don't want to know! I know nothing about him and I don't know him! but what I do know is, that there was never anything but miserable wretches among all that rabble! that they were all beggars, assassins, red caps, thieves! I say all! I say all! I know nobody! I say all! do you hear, Marius? Look you, in deed, you are as much a baron as my slipper! they were all bandits who served Robespierre! all brigands who served B-u-o-naparte! all traitors who betrayed, betrayed, betrayed! their legitimate king! all cowards who ran from the Prussians and the English."

Marius shuddered in every limb, he knew not what to do, his head burned. He was for a few moments dizzy and staggering with all this whirlwind in his head; then he raised his eyes, looked straight at his grandfather, and cried in a thundering voice:

"Down with the Bourbons, and that great hog Louis XVIII!"

Louis XVIII. had been dead for four years; but it was all the same to him.

The old man, scarlet as he was, suddenly became whiter than his hair. He turned towards a bust of the Duke de Berry which stood upon the mantel, and bowed to it profoundly with a sort of peculiar majesty. Then he walked twice slowly and

in silence, from the fireplace to the window and from the window to the fireplace, traversing the whole length of the room and making the floor crack as if an image of stone were walking over it. The second time, he bent towards his daughter, who was enduring the shock with the stupor of an aged sheep, and said to her with a smile that was almost calm:

"A baron like Monsieur and a bourgeois like me cannot remain under the same roof."

And all at once straightening up, pallid, trembling, terrible, his forehead swelling with the fearful radiance of anger, he stretched his arm towards Marius and cried to him:

"Be off."

Marius left the house.

The next day, M. Gillenormand said to his daughter:

"You will send sixty pistoles every six months to this blood-drinker, and never speak of him to me again."

Having an immense residuum of fury to expend, and not knowing what to do with it, he spoke to his daughter with coldness for more than three months.

Marius, for his part, departed in indignation. A circumstance, which we must mention, had aggravated his exasperation still more. In hurriedly carrying away, at the old man's command, Marius' "things" to his room, Nicolette had, without perceiving it, dropped, probably on the garret stairs, which were dark, the black shagreen medallion which contained the paper written by the colonel. Neither the paper nor the medallion could be found. Marius was convinced that "Monsieur Gillenormand"—from that day forth he never named him otherwise—had thrown "his father's will" into the fire. He knew by heart the few lines written by the colonel, and consequently nothing was lost. But the paper, the writing, that sacred relic, all that was his heart itself. What had been done with it?

Marius went away without saying where he was going, and without knowing where he was going, with thirty francs, his watch and a few clothes in a carpet bag. He hired a cabriolet by the hour, jumped in, and drove at random towards the Latin Quarter.

CHAPTER III

At that period, apparently indifferent, something of a revolutionary thrill was vaguely felt. Whispers coming from the depths of '89 and '92 were in the air. Young Paris was, excuse the expression, in the process of moulting. People

were transformed almost without suspecting it, by the very movement of the time. The hand which moves over the dial moves also among souls. Each one took the step forward which was before him. Royalists became liberals, liberals became democrats.

It was like a rising tide, complicated by a thousand ebbs; the peculiarity of the ebb is to make mixtures; thence very singular combinations of ideas; men worshipped at the same time Napoleon and liberty. We are now writing history. These were the mirages of that day. Opinions pass through phases. Voltarian royalism, a grotesque variety, had a fellow not less strange, Buonapartist liberalism.

Other groups of minds were more serious. They fathomed principle; they attached themselves to right. They longed for the absolute, they caught glimpses of the infinite realisations; the absolute, by its very rigidity, pushes the mind towards the boundless, and makes it float in the illimitable. There is nothing like dream to create the future. Utopia to-day, flesh and blood to-morrow.

At that time there were not yet in France any of these underlying organisations like the German Tugendbund and the Italian Carbonari; but here and there obscure excavations were branching out. La Cougourde was assuming form at Aix; there was in Paris, among other affiliations of this kind, the Society of Friends of the A B C.

Who were the Friends of the A B C? A society, having as its aim, in appearance, the education of children; in reality, the elevation of men.

They declared themselves the Friends of the A B C because, punningly, the *abaissé* [the abased] were the people. They wished to raise them up. Most of the members were students, in thorough understanding with a few working-men. The names of the principal belong to a certain extent to history: Enjolras, Combeferre, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Bahorel, Lesgle, or Laigle, Joly, Grantaire.

These young men constituted a sort of family among themselves, by force of friendship. Enjolras was the chief, Combeferre was the guide, Courfeyrac was the centre. The others gave more light, he gave more heat; the truth is, that he had all the qualities of a centre, roundness and radiance.

In this conclave of young heads there was one bald member. He signed his name Lègle (de Meaux). His comrades, for the sake of brevity, called him Bossuet.

Well, then, on a certain afternoon, Laigle de Meaux was leaning lazily back against the doorway of the Café Musain. He was thinking, without melancholy, of a little mishap which

had befallen him the day before at the law school, and which modified his personal plans for the future—plans which were, moreover, rather indefinite.

Reverie does not hinder a cabriolet from going by, nor the dreamer from noticing the cabriolet. Laigle de Meaux, whose eyes were wandering in a sort of general stroll, perceived, through all his somnambulism, a two-wheeled vehicle turning into the square which was moving at a walk, as if undecided. What did this cabriolet want? why was it moving at a walk? Laigle looked at it. There was inside, beside the driver, a young man, and before the young man, a large carpet-bag. The bag exhibited to the passers this name, written in big black letters upon a card sewed to the cloth: MARIUS PONTMERCY.

This name changed Laigle's attitude. He straightened up and addressed this apostrophe to the young man in the cabriolet:

"Monsieur Marius Pontmercy?"

The cabriolet, thus called upon, stopped.

The young man, who also seemed to be profoundly musing, raised his eyes.

"Well?" said he.

"You are Monsieur Marius Pontmercy?"

"Certainly."

"I was looking for you," said Laigle de Meaux.

"How is that?" inquired Marius; for he it was, in fact; he had just left his grandfather's, and he had before him a face which he saw for the first time. "I do not know you."

"Nor I either. I do not know you," answered Laigle.

Marius thought he had met a buffoon, and that this was the beginning of a mystification in the middle of the street. He was not in a pleasant humour just at that moment. He knit his brows; Laigle de Meaux, imperturbable, continued:

"You were not at school yesterday."

"It is possible."

"It is certain."

"You are a student?" inquired Marius.

"Yes, Monsieur. Like you. Day before yesterday I happened to go into the school. You know, one sometimes has such notions. The professor was about to call the roll. You know that they are very ridiculous just at that time. If you miss the third call, they erase your name. Sixty francs gone."

Marius began to listen. Laigle continued:

"It was Blondeau who was calling the roll. You know Blondeau; he has a very sharp and very malicious nose, and delights in smelling out the absent. He slyly commenced with

the letter P. I was not listening, not being concerned in that letter. The roll went on well, no erasure, the universe was present, Blondeau was sad. I said to myself, Blondeau, my love, you won't do the slightest execution to-day. Suddenly, Blondeau calls 'Marius Pontmercy'; nobody answers. Blondeau, full of hope, repeats louder; 'Marius Pontmercy?' And he seizes his pen. Monsieur, I have bowels. I said to myself rapidly: Here is a brave fellow who is going to be erased. Attention. This is a real live fellow who is not punctual. He is not a good boy. He is not a bookworm, a student who studies, a white-billed pedant, strong on science, letters, theology and wisdom, one of those numskulls drawn out with four pins; a pin for each faculty. He is an honourable idler who loafs, who likes to rusticate, who cultivates the grisette, who pays his court to beauty, who is, perhaps, at this very moment, with my mistress. Let us save him. Death to Blondeau! At that moment Blondeau, dipped his pen, black with erasures, into the ink, cast his tawny eye over the room, and repeated for the third time: 'Marius Pontmercy!' I answered: 'Present!' In that way you were not erased."

"Monsieur!—" said Marius.

"And I was," added Laigle le Meaux.

"I do not understand you," said Marius.

Laigle resumed:

"Nothing more simple. I was near the chair to answer, and near the door to escape. The professor was looking at me with a certain fixedness. Suddenly, Blondeau, who must be the malignant nose of which Boileau speaks, leaps to the letter L. L is my letter; I am of Meaux, and my name is Lesgle."

"L'Aigle!" interrupted Marius, "what a fine name."

"Monsieur, the Blondeau re-echoes this fine name, and cried: 'Laigle!' I answer: 'Present!' Then Blondeau looks at me with the gentleness of a tiger, smiles, and says: If you are Pontmercy, you are not Laigle. A phrase which is uncomplimentary to you, but which brought me only to grief. So saying, he erases me."

"Monsieur, I am mortified——"

"Young man," said Laigle of Meaux, "let this be a lesson to you. In future, be punctual."

"I really must give you a thousand excuses."

"Never expose yourself again to having your neighbour erased."

"I am very sorry."

Laigle burst out laughing.

"And I, in raptures; I was on the brink of being a lawyer."

This rupture saves me. I renounce the triumph of the bar. I shall not defend the widow, and I shall not attack the orphan. No more toga, no more probation. Here is my erasure obtained. It is to you that I owe it, Monsieur Pontmercy. I intend to pay you a solemn visit of thanks; where do you live?"

"In this cabriolet," said Marius.

"A sign of opulence," replied Laigle, calmly. "I congratulate you. You have here rent of nine thousand francs a year."

Just then Courfeyrac came out of the café.

Marius smiled sadly.

"I have been paying this rent for two hours, and I hope to get out of it; but, it is the usual story, I do not know where to go."

"Monsieur," said Courfeyrac, "come home with me."

"I should have priority," observed Laigle, "but I have no home."

"Silence, Bossuet," replied Courfeyrac.

"Bossuet," said Marius, "but I thought you called yourself Laigle."

"Of Meaux," answered Laigle; "metaphorically, Bossuet."

Courfeyrac got into the cabriolet.

"Driver," said he, "Hôtel de la Porte Saint Jacques."

And that same evening, Marius was installed in a room at the Hôtel de la Porte Saint Jacques, side by side with Courfeyrac, and in a few days his friend. Courfeyrac asked him no questions. He did not even think of it. At that age, the countenance tells all at once. Speech is useless. There are some young men of whom we might say their physiognomies are talkative. They look at one another; they know one another.

One morning, however, Courfeyrac abruptly put this question to him:

"By the way, have you any political opinions?"

"What do you mean?" said Marius, almost offended at the question.

"What are you?"

"Buonapartist democrat."

"Grey shade of quiet mouse colour," said Courfeyrac.

The next day, Courfeyrac introduced Marius to the Café Musain. Then he whispered in his ear with a smile: "I must give you your admission into the revolution." And he took him into the room of the Friends of the A B C. He presented him to the other members, saying in an undertone this simple word which Marius did not understand: "A pupil."

A stern thought, oddly brought out of a clatter of words, suddenly crossed the tumult of speech in which Grantaire, Bahorel, Prouvaire, Bossuet, Combeferre and Courfeyrac were confusedly fencing.

In the midst of the uproar, Bossuet suddenly ended some apostrophe to Combeferre with this date: "The 18th of June, 1815—Waterloo."

At this name Waterloo, Marius, who was leaning on a table with a glass of water by him, took his hand away from under his chin, and began to look earnestly about the room.

"Pardieu," exclaimed Courfeyrac—*Parbleu*, at that period, was falling into disuse—"that number 18 is strange and striking to me. It is the fatal number of Buonaparte. Put Louis before and Brumaire behind, you have the whole destiny of the man, with this expressive peculiarity, that the beginning is hard pressed by the end."

Enjolras, till now dumb, broke the silence, and thus addressed Courfeyrac:

"You mean the crime by the expiation."

This word "crime" exceeded the limits of the endurance of Marius, already much excited by the abrupt evocation of Waterloo.

He rose. He walked slowly towards the map of France spread out upon the wall, at the bottom of which could be seen an island in a separate compartment. He laid his finger upon this compartment and said:

"Corsica. A little island which has made France truly great."

This was a breath of freezing air. All was silent. They felt that now something was to be said.

Enjolras, whose blue eye was not fixed upon anybody, and seemed staring into space, answered without looking at Marius:

"France needs no Corsica to be great. France is great because she is France. *Quia nominor leo*."

Marius felt no desire to retreat. He turned towards Enjolras, and his voice rang with a vibration which came from the quivering of his nerves.

"God forbid that I should lessen France! but it is not lessening her to join her with Napoleon. To conquer the world twice, by conquest and by resplendence, this is sublime, and what can be more grand?"

"To be free," said Combeferre.

Marius bowed his head; these cold and simple words had pierced his epic effusion like a blade of steel, and he felt it vanish within him. That evening left him in a profound agitation, with a sorrowful darkness in his soul. He had but just

attained a faith; could he so soon reject it? Steep cliffs rose about him. He was on good terms neither with his grandfather nor with his friends; rash towards the former, backward towards the others; and he felt doubly isolated, from old age, and also from youth. He went no more to the Café Musain.

In this trouble in which his mind was plunged he scarcely gave a thought to certain serious phases of existence. The realities of life do not allow themselves to be forgotten. They came and jogged his memory sharply.

One morning, the keeper of the house entered Marius' room, and said to him:

"Monsieur Courfeyrac is responsible for you."

"Yes."

"But I am in need of money."

"Ask Courfeyrac to come and speak with me," said Marius.

Courfeyrac came; the host left them. Marius related to him what he had not thought of telling him before, that he was, so to speak, alone in the world, without any relatives.

"What are you going to become?" said Courfeyrac.

"I have no idea," answered Marius.

"Do you know English?"

"No."

"Do you know German?"

"No."

"That is bad."

"Why?"

"Because a friend of mine, a bookseller, is making a sort of encyclopædia, for which you could have translated German or English articles. It is poor pay, but it gives a living."

"I will learn English and German."

"And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime I will eat my coats and my watch."

A clothes dealer was sent for. He gave twenty francs for Marius' clothes. They went to a watchmaker. He gave forty-five francs for his watch.

"That is not bad," said Marius to Courfeyrac, on returning to the house; "with my fifteen francs, this makes eighty francs."

"The hotel bill?" observed Courfeyrac.

"Ah! I forgot," said Marius.

The host presented his bill, which must be paid on the spot. It amounted to seventy francs.

"I have ten francs left," said Marius.

"The devil," said Courfeyrac; "you will have five francs to eat while you are learning English, and five francs while

you are learning German. That will be swallowing a language very rapidly or a hundred sous piece very slowly."

Meanwhile Aunt Gillenormand, who was really a kind person on sad occasions, had finally unearthed Marius's lodgings.

One morning when Marius came home from the school, he found a letter from his aunt, and the *sixty pistoles*, that is to say, six hundred francs in gold, in a sealed box.

Marius sent the thirty louis back to his aunt, with a respectful letter, in which he told her that he had the means of living, and that he could provide henceforth for all his necessities. At that time he had three francs left. He then left the Porte Saint Jacques hotel, unwilling to contract debt.

CHAPTER IV

Life became stern to Marius. To eat his coats and his watch was nothing. He chewed that inexpressible thing which is called "the cud of bitterness." A horrible thing, which includes days without bread, nights without sleep, evenings without a candle, a hearth without a fire, weeks without labour, a future without hope, a coat out at the elbows, an old hat which makes young girls laugh, the door found shut against you at night because you have not paid your rent, the insolence of the landlord, the jibes of neighbours, humiliations, self-respect outraged, any drudgery acceptable, disgust, bitterness, prostration—Marius learned how one swallows down all these things, and how they are often the only things that one has to swallow. On several occasions, Aunt Gillenormand made overtures, and sent him the sixty pistoles. Marius always sent them back, saying that he had no need of anything.

He was still in mourning for his father, when the revolution which we have described was accomplished in his ideas. Since then, he had never left off black clothes. His clothes left him, however. A day came, at last, when he had no coat. His trousers were going also. What was to be done? Courfeyrac, for whom he also had done some good turns, gave him an old coat. For thirty sous, Marius had it turned by some porter or other, and it was a new coat. But this coat was green. Then Marius did not go out till after nightfall. That made his coat black. Desiring always to be in mourning, he clothed himself with night.

Through all this, he procured admission to the bar. He was reputed to occupy Courfeyrac's room, which was decent, and where a certain number of law books, supported and filled

out by some odd volumes of novels, made up the library required by the rules.

When Marius had become a lawyer, he informed his grandfather of it, in a letter which was frigid, but full of submission and respect. M. Gillenormand took the letter with trembling hands, read it, and threw it, torn in pieces, into the basket. Two or three days afterwards, Mademoiselle Gillenormand overheard her father, who was alone in his room, talking aloud. This was always the case when he was much excited. She listened; the old man said: "If you were not a fool, you would know that a man cannot be a baron and a lawyer at the same time."

By the side of his father's name, another name was engraven upon Marius's heart. The name of Thenardier. Marius, in his enthusiastic yet serious nature, surrounded with a sort of halo the man to whom, as he thought, he owed his father's life, that brave sergeant who had saved the colonel in the midst of the balls and bullets of Waterloo. He never separated the memory of this man from the memory of his father, and he associated them in his veneration. It was a sort of worship with two steps, the high altar for the colonel, the low one for Thenardier. The idea of the misfortune into which he knew that Thenardier had fallen and been engulfed, intensified his feeling of gratitude. Marius had learned at Montfermeil of the ruin and bankruptcy of the unlucky inn-keeper. Since then, he had made untold efforts to get track of him, and to endeavour to find him, in that dark abyss of misery in which Thenardier had disappeared. To see Thenardier, to render some service to Thenardier, to say to him: "You do not know me, but I do know you. Here I am, dispose of me!" This was the sweetest and most magnificent dream of Marius.

He was now twenty years old. It was three years since he had left his grandfather. They remained on the same terms on both sides, without attempting a reconciliation, and without seeking to meet. To tell the truth, Marius was mistaken as to his grandfather's heart. In reality, M. Gillenormand worshipped him. Old men need affection as they do sunshine. It is warmth. However strong his nature might be, the absence of Marius had changed something in him. He said sometimes: "Oh! if he would come back, what a good box on the ear I would give him."

Marius's life was solitary. From his taste for remaining outside of everything, and also from having been startled by its excesses, he had decided not to enter the group presided over by Enjolras. They had remained good friends; they were

ready to help one another, if need were, in all possible ways; but nothing more. Marius had two friends, one young, Courfeyrac, and one old, M. Mabeuf. He inclined towards the old one. First he was indebted to him for the revolution through which he had gone; he was indebted to him for having known and loved his father. "He operated upon me for the cataract," said he.

Towards the middle of this year, 1831, the old woman who waited upon Marius told him that his neighbours, the wretched Jondrette family, were to be turned into the street. Marius, who passed almost all his days out of doors, hardly knew that he had any neighbours.

"Why are they turned out?" said he.

"Because they do not pay their rent; they owe for two terms."

"How much is that?"

"Twenty francs," said the old woman.

Marius had thirty francs in reserve in a drawer.

"Here," said he to the old woman, "there are twenty-five francs. Pay for these poor people; give them five francs, and do not tell them that it is from me."

At the time of his most wretched poverty he noticed that girls turned when he passed, and with a deathly feeling in his heart he fled or hid himself. He thought they looked at him on account of his old clothes, and that they were laughing at him; the truth is, they looked at him because of his graceful appearance, and they dreamed over it.

This wordless misunderstanding between him and the pretty girls he met had rendered him hostile to society. He attached himself to none, for the excellent reason that he fled before all. There were, however, in all the immensity of creation, two women from whom Marius never fled, and whom he did not at all avoid. Indeed, he would have been very much astonished had anybody told him that they were women. One was the old woman who swept his room. The other was a little girl that he saw very often, and that he never looked at.

For more than a year Marius had noticed in a retired walk of the Luxembourg, the walk which borders the parapet of the Pépinière, a man and a girl quite young, nearly always sitting side by side, on the same seat, at the most retired end of the walk, near the Rue de l'Ouest. Whenever that chance which controls the promenades of men whose eye is turned within, led Marius to this walk—and it was almost every day—he found this couple there. The man might be sixty years old; he seemed sad and serious; his whole person presented the robust but wearied appearance of a soldier retired from

active service. Had he worn a decoration, Marius would have said: "It is an old officer." His expression was kind, but it did not invite approach, and he never returned a look. He wore a blue coat and pantaloons, and a broad-brimmed hat, which always appeared to be new; a black cravat and Quaker linen, that is to say, brilliantly white, but of coarse texture. A grisette passing near him one day, said: "There is a very nice widower." His hair was perfectly white.

The first time the young girl that accompanied him sat down on the seat which they seemed to have adopted, she looked like a girl of about thirteen or fourteen, puny to the extent of being almost ugly, awkward, insignificant, yet promising, perhaps, to have rather fine eyes. But they were always looking about with a disagreeable assurance. She wore the dress, at once aged and childish, peculiar to the convent school-girl—an ill-fitting garment of coarse black merino. They appeared to be father and daughter.

Marius would generally reach the walk at the end opposite their seat, promenade the whole length of it, passing before them, then return to the end by which he entered, and so on. He performed this turn five or six times in his promenade, and this promenade five or six times a week, but they and he had never come to exchange bows. This man and this young girl, though they appeared, and perhaps because they appeared, to avoid observation, had naturally excited the attention of the five or six students. Courfeyrac had noticed them at some time or other, but finding the girl homely, had very quickly and carefully avoided them. Struck especially by the dress of the little girl, and the hair of the old man, he had named the daughter "Mademoiselle Lenoire" (Black), and the father "Monsieur Leblanc" (White); and so, as nobody knew them otherwise, in the absence of a name, this surname had become fixed. The students said: "Ah! Monsieur Leblanc is at his seat!" and Marius, like the rest, had found it convenient to call this unknown gentleman M. Leblanc.

We shall do as they did, and say M. Leblanc for the convenience of this story.

Marius saw them thus nearly every day at the same hour during the first year. He found the man very much to his liking, but the girl rather disagreeable. And then, the second year, at the precise point of this history to which the reader has arrived, it so happened that Marius broke off this habit of going to the Luxembourg, without really knowing why himself, and there were nearly six months during which he did not set foot in his walk. At last he went back there again one day; it was a serene summer morning. Marius was as happy

as one always is when the weather is fine. It seemed to him as if he had in his heart all the bird songs which he heard, and all the bits of blue sky which he saw through the trees.

He went straight to "his walk," and as soon as he reached it he saw, still on the same seat, this well-known pair. When he came near them, however, he saw that it was indeed the same man, but it seemed to him that it was no longer the same girl. The woman whom he now saw was a noble creature, with all the most bewitching outlines of woman, at the precise moment at which they are combined with all the most charming graces of childhood, that pure and fleeting moment which can only be translated by these two words, sweet fifteen.

The second time that Marius came near her, the young girl raised her eyes, their glances met.

But what was there now in the glance of the young girl? Marius could not have told. There was nothing, and there was everything. It was a strange flash.

She cast down her eyes, and he continued on his way.

What he had seen was not the simple, artless eye of a child; it was a mysterious abyss, half-opened, then suddenly closed.

The next day, at the usual hour, Marius took from his closet his new coat, his new pantaloons, his new hat and his new boots; he dressed himself in this panoply complete, put on his gloves, prodigious prodigality, and went to the Luxembourg.

The young girl was there with Monsieur Leblanc. Marius approached as near as he could, seeming to be reading a book, but he was still very far off; then he returned and sat down on his seat, where he spent four hours watching the artless little sparrows as they hopped along the walk; they seemed to him to be mocking him.

Thus a fortnight rolled away. Marius went to the Luxembourg, no longer to promenade, but to sit down, always in the same place, and without knowing why. Once there he did not stir. Every morning he put on his new suit, not to be conspicuous, and he began again the next morning.

He finally grew bolder, and approached nearer to the seat. However, he passed before it no more, obeying at once the instinct of timidity and the instinct of prudence, peculiar to lovers. He thought it better not to attract the "attention of the father." He formed his combinations of stations behind trees and the pedestals of statues, with consummate art, so as to be seen as much as possible by the young girl and as little as possible by the old gentleman. Sometimes he would stand for half an hour motionless behind some Leonidas or Spartacus with a book in his hand, over which his eyes, timidly raised,

were looking for the young girl, while she, for her part, was turning her charming profile towards him, suffused with a smile. While yet talking in the most natural and quiet way in the world, with the white-haired man, she rested upon Marius all the dreams of a maidenly and passionate eye. Ancient and immemorial art which Eve knew from the first day of the world, and which every woman knows from the first day of her life! Her tongue replied to one and her eyes to the other.

We must, however, suppose that M. Leblanc perceived something of this at last, for often when Marius came, he would rise and begin to promenade. Sometimes he came alone. Then Marius did not stay. And then there came to him a good fortune for which he had not hoped oil upon the fire, double darkness upon his eyes. One night, at dusk, he found on the seat, which "M. Leblanc and his daughter" had just left a handkerchief, a plain handkerchief, without embroidery, but white, fine and which appeared to him to exhale ineffable odours. He seized it in transport. This handkerchief was marked with the letters U. F. Marius knew nothing of this beautiful girl, neither her family, nor her name, nor her dwelling; these two letters were the first thing he had caught of her, adorable initials upon which he began straightway to build his castle. It was evidently her first name. Ursula, thought he; what a sweet name! He kissed the handkerchief, inhaled its perfume, put it over his heart, on his flesh in the day-time, and at night went to sleep with it on his lips.

"I feel her whole soul in it!" he exclaimed.

This handkerchief belonged to the old gentleman, who had simply let it fall from his pocket.

Hunger comes with love. To know that her name was Ursula had been much; it was little. In three or four weeks Marius had devoured this piece of good fortune. He desired another. He wished to know where she lived. He followed "Ursula."

She lived in the Rue de l'Ouest, in the least frequented part of it, in a new three-storey house, of modest appearance.

One night after he had followed them home, and seen them disappear at the *porte-cochère*, he entered after them, and said boldly to the porter:

"Is it the gentleman on the first floor who has just come in?"

"No," answered the porter. "It is the gentleman on the third."

Another fact. This success made Marius still bolder.

"In front?" he asked.

"Faith!" said the porter, "the house is only built on the street."

"And what is this gentleman?"

"He lives on his income, Monsieur. A very kind man, who does a great deal of good among the poor, though not rich."

"What is his name?" he continued.

The porter raised his head, and said:

"Is Monsieur a detective?"

Marius retired, much abashed, but still in great transports. He was getting on.

Next day Monsieur Leblanc passed his daughter in, and then stopped, and before entering himself, turned and looked steadily at Marius. The day after that Marius waited in vain all day.

At nightfall he went to the Rue de l'Ouest, and saw a light in the window of the third story. He walked beneath these windows until the light was put out.

The next day nobody at the Luxembourg. Marius waited all day, and then went to perform his night duty under the windows. That took him till ten o'clock in the evening. His dinner took care of itself. Fever supports the sick man, and love the lover.

He passed a week in this way. Monsieur Leblanc and his daughter appeared at the Luxembourg no more. Marius made melancholy conjectures; he dared not watch the *porte-cochère* during the day. He limited himself to going at night to gaze upon the reddish light of the windows. At times he saw shadows moving, and his heart beat high.

On the eighth day when he reached the house, there was no light in the windows. He knocked at the *porte-cochère*; went in and said to the porter:

"The gentleman of the third floor?"

"Moved," answered the porter.

Marius tottered, and said feebly:

"Where does he live now?"

"I don't know anything about it."

"He has not left his new address, then?"

"No."

And the porter, looking up, recognised Marius.

"What! it is you!" said he, but decidedly now, "you do keep a bright look-out."

CHAPTER V

Summer passed, then autumn; winter came. Neither M. Leblanc nor the young girl had set foot in the Luxembourg. Marius had now but one thought—to see that sweet, that adorable face again. He searched continually; he searched everywhere; he found nothing. He was no longer Marius the enthusiastic dreamer, the resolute man, ardent yet firm, the bold challenger of destiny, the brain which projected and built future upon future, the young heart full of plans, projects, prides, ideas and desires; he was a lost dog. He fell into a melancholy. It was all over with him. Work disgusted him, walking fatigued him, solitude wearied him, vast nature, once so full of forms, of illuminations, of voices, of counsels, of perspective, of horizons, of teachings, was now a void before him. It seemed to him that everything had disappeared.

He still lived in the Gorbeau tenement. He paid no attention to anybody there.

At this time, it is true, there were no occupants remaining in the house but himself and those Jondrettes whose rent he had once paid, without having ever spoken, however, either to the father or to the mother or to the daughters. The other tenants had moved away or died, or had been turned out for not paying their rent.

One day in the course of this winter Marius went slowly up the boulevard towards the *barrière*, on the way to the Rue Saint Jacques. He was walking thoughtfully, with his head down.

Suddenly he felt that he was elbowed in the dusk. He turned, and saw two young girls in rags, one tall and slender, the other a little shorter, passing rapidly by, breathless, frightened, and apparently in flight. They had met him, had not seen him, and had jostled him in passing. Marius could see in the twilight their livid faces, their hair tangled and flying, their frightful bonnets, their tattered skirts, and their naked feet. As they ran they were talking to each other. The taller one said in a very low voice:

“The *cognes* came. They just missed *pincer* me at the *demi-cercle*.”

Marius understood, through this dismal argot, that the gendarmes, or the city police, had not succeeded in seizing these two girls, and that the girls had escaped.

They plunged in under the trees of the boulevard behind

him, and for a few seconds made a kind of dim whiteness in the obscurity which soon faded out.

Marius stopped for a moment.

He was about to resume his course, when he perceived a little greyish packet on the ground at his feet. He stooped down and picked it up. It was a sort of envelope, which appeared to contain papers.

"Good," said he; "those poor creatures must have dropped this."

He retraced his steps, he called, he did not find them; he concluded they were already beyond hearing, put the packet in his pocket, and went to dinner.

In the evening, as he was undressing to go to bed, he happened to feel in his coat-pocket the packet which he had picked up on the boulevard. He had forgotten it. He thought it might be well to open it, and that the packet might perhaps contain the address of the young girls, if, in reality, it belonged to them, or at all events the information necessary to restore it to the person who had lost it.

He opened the enveloped. It was unsealed and contained four letters, also unsealed. Glancing over them, he saw that they were addressed to four different persons and were signed by four different persons, but, strangely enough, all four were written in the same hand. He read one of them through. There was on the address: *To the beneficent gentleman of the church Saint Jacques du Haut Pas.* It contained these few lines:

"Beneficent man,

"If you will deign to accompany my daughter, you will see a miserable calamity, and I will show you my certificates.

"At the sight of these writings your generous soul will be moved with a sentiment of lively benevolence, for true philosophers always experience vivid emotions.

"I await your presence or your offering, if you deign to make it, and I pray you to have the kindness to accept the respectful sentiments with which I am proud to be,

"Truly magnanimous man,

"Your very humble

"And very obedient servant,

"P. FABANTOU, dramatic artist."

After reading the other letters, Marius did not find himself much wiser than before. After all, they were but waste-paper evidently without value. He put them back into the envelope, threw it into a corner, and went to bed.

About seven o'clock in the morning he had got up and

breakfasted, and was trying to set about his work when there was a gentle rap at his door.

"Come in," said Marius.

The door opened.

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur——"

It was a hollow, cracked, smothered, rasping voice, the voice of an old man, roughened by brandy and by liquors.

Marius turned quickly and saw a young girl. She was standing in the half-opened door. The little round window through which the light found its way into the garret was exactly opposite the door, and lit up this form with a pallid light. It was a pale, puny, meagre creature, nothing but a chemise and a skirt covered a shivering and chilly nakedness. A string for a belt, a string for a head-dress, sharp shoulders protruding from the chemise, a blond and lymphatic pallor, dirty shoulder-blades, red hands, the mouth open and sunken, some teeth gone, the eyes dull, bold and drooping, the form of an unripe young girl and the look of a corrupted old woman; fifty years joined with fifteen; one of those beings who are both feeble and horrible at once, and who make those shudder whom they do not make weep.

Marius arose and gazed with a kind of astonishment upon this being, so much like the shadowy forms which pass across our dreams.

The most touching thing about it was that this young girl had not come into the world to be ugly. In her early childhood she must have been even pretty. The grace of her youth was still struggling against the hideous old age brought on by debauchery and poverty. A remnant of beauty was dying out upon this face of sixteen, like the pale sun which is extinguished by frightful clouds at the dawn of a winter's day.

This face was not absolutely unknown to Marius. He thought he remembered having seen it somewhere.

"What do you wish, Mademoiselle?" asked he.

The young girl answered with her voice like a drunken galley-slave's:

"Here is a letter for you, Monsieur Marius."

She called Marius by his name; he could not doubt that her business was with him; but what was this girl? how did she know his name?

Marius, in opening the letter, noticed that the enormously large wafer was still wet. The message could not have come far. He read:

"My amiable neighbour, young man.

"I have learned your kindness towards me, that you have paid my rent six months ago. I bless you, young man. My

eldest daughter will tell you that we have been without a morsel of bread for two days, four persons, and my spouse sick. If I am not deceived by my thoughts, I think I may hope that your generous heart will soften at this exposure and that the desire will subjugate you of being propitious to me by deigning to lavish upon me some light gift.

"I am with the distinguished consideration which is due to the benefactors of humanity,

" JONDRETTE.

"P.S. My daughter will await your orders, dear Monsieur Marius."

This letter, in the midst of the obscure accident which had occupied Marius's thoughts since the previous evening, was a candle in a cave. Everything was suddenly cleared up.

This letter came from the same source as the other four. It was the same writing, the same style, the same orthography, the same paper, the same odour of tobacco.

Meanwhile, while Marius fixed upon her an astonished and sorrowful look, the young girl was walking to and fro in the room with the boldness of a spectre. She bustled about regardless of her nakedness. At times, her chemise, unfastened and torn, fell almost to her waist. She moved the chairs, she disarranged the toilet articles on the bureau, she felt of Marius's clothes, she searched over what there was in the corners.

"Ah!" said she, "you have a mirror!"

And she hummed, as if she had been alone, snatches of songs, light refrains which were made dismal by her harsh and guttural voice. Beneath this boldness could be conceived an indescribable constraint, restlessness and humility. Effrontery is a shame.

Marius was reflecting, and let her go on.

She went to the table.

"Ah!" said she, "books!"

A light flashed through her glassy eye. She resumed, and her tone expressed that happiness of being able to boast of something, to which no human creature is insensible:

"I can read, I can."

She hastily caught up the book which lay open on the table, and read fluently:

"— General Bauduin received the order to take five battalions of his brigade and carry the château of Hougomont, which is in the middle of the plain of Waterloo——"

She stopped:

"Ah, Waterloo! I know that. It is a battle in old times. My father was there; my father served in the armies. We are

jolly good Buonapartists at home, that we are. Against English, Waterloo is."

She put down the book, took up a pen, and exclaimed:

"And I can write too!"

She dipped the pen in the ink, and turning towards Marius:

"Would you like to see? Here, I am going to write a word to show."

And before he had had time to answer, she wrote upon a sheet of blank paper which was on the middle of the table: "The Cognes are here."

Then, throwing down the pen:

"There are no mistakes in spelling. You can look. We have received an education, my sister and I. We have not always been what we are. We were not made——"

Here she stopped, fixed her faded eye upon Marius, and burst out laughing, saying in a tone which contained complete anguish stifled by complete cynicism:

"Bah!"

Then she looked at Marius, put on a strange manner, and said to him:

"Do you know, Monsieur Marius, that you are a very pretty boy?"

She went to him, and laid her hand on his shoulder: "You pay no attention to me, but I know you, Monsieur Marius. I meet you here on the stairs, and then I see you visiting a man named Father Mabeuf, who lives out by Austerlitz, sometimes, when I am walking that way. That becomes you very well, your tangled hair."

Her voice tried to be very soft, but succeeded only in being very low. Some of her words were lost in their passage from the larynx to the lips, as upon a key-board in which some notes are missing.

Marius had drawn back quietly.

"Mademoiselle," said he, with his cold gravity, "I have here a packet, which is yours, I think. Permit me to return it to you."

And he handed her the envelope, which contained the four letters.

She clapped her hands and exclaimed:

"We have looked everywhere!"

Then she snatched the packet, and unfolded the petition addressed "to the beneficent gentleman of the church Saint Jacques du Haut Pas."

"Here!" said she, "this is for the old fellow who goes to mass. And this too is the hour. I am going to carry it to him. He will give us something perhaps for breakfast."

After a thorough exploration of his pockets, Marius at last got together five francs and sixteen sous. This was at the time all that he had in the world. "That is enough for my dinner to-day," thought he, "to-morrow we will see." He took the sixteen sous, and gave the five francs to the young girl.

She took the piece eagerly, drew her chemise up over her shoulders, made a low bow to Marius, then a familiar wave of the hand, and moved towards the door, saying:

"Good-morning, monsieur. It is all the same. I am going to find my old man."

On her way she saw on the bureau a dry crust of bread moulding there in the dust; she sprang upon it, and bit it, muttering:

"That is good! it is hard! it breaks my teeth!"

Then she went out, leaving Marius to reproach himself with the fact that he had been so absorbed in his reveries and passion that he had not until now cast a glance upon his neighbours. What! a mere wall separated him from these abandoned beings, who lived by groping in the night without the pale of the living. He looked at the wall which separated him from the Jondrettes, as if he could send his pitying glance through that partition to warn those unfortunate beings. The wall was a thin layer of plaster, upheld by laths and joists, through which voices and words could be distinguished perfectly. None but the dreamer, Marius, would not have perceived this before. There was no paper hung on this wall, either on the side of the Jondrettes or on Marius's side; its coarse construction was bare to the eye. Almost unconsciously, Marius examined this partition; sometimes reverie examines, observes and scrutinises, as thought would do. Suddenly he arose, he noticed towards the top, near the ceiling, a triangular hole, where three laths left a space between them. Pity has and should have its curiosity. This hole was a kind of Judas. It is lawful to look upon misfortune like a betrayer for the sake of relieving it. "Let us see what these people are," thought Marius, "and to what they are reduced."

He climbed upon the bureau, put his eye to the crevice, and looked.

Marius was poor and his room was poorly furnished, but even as his poverty was noble, his garret was clean. The den into which his eyes were at that moment directed was abject, filthy, fetid, infectious, gloomy, unclean. All the furniture was a straw chair, a rickety table, a few old broken dishes, and in two of the corners two indescribable pallets; all the light came from a dormer window of four panes, curtained with spiders'

webs. Just enough light came through that loophole to make a man's face appear like the face of a phantom.

By the table, upon which Marius saw a pen, ink and paper, was seated a man of about sixty, small, thin, livid, haggard, with a keen, cruel and restless air; a hideous harpy. He was dressed in a woman's chemise, which showed his shaggy breast and his naked arms bristling with grey hairs. Below this chemise were a pair of muddy pantaloons and boots from which the toes stuck out.

A big woman, who might have been forty years old or a hundred, was squatting near the fireplace, upon her bare feet.

She also was dressed only in a chemise and a knit skirt patched with pieces of old cloth. She had hideous hair, light red sprinkled with grey, that she pushed back from time to time with her huge shining hands which had flat nails.

Upon one of the pallets Marius could discern a sort of slender little wan girl seated, almost naked, with her feet hanging down, having the appearance neither of listening, nor of seeing, nor of living. With a heavy heart he was about to get down from the sort of observatory which he had extemporised, when a sound attracted his attention, and induced him to remain in his place.

The door of the garret was hastily opened. The eldest daughter appeared upon the threshold. She came in, pushed the door to behind her, stopped to take breath, for she was quite breathless, then cried with an expression of joy and triumph:

"He is coming!"

The father turned his eyes, the woman turned her head, the younger sister did not stir.

"Who?" asked the father.

"The gentleman!"

"And how do you know that he will come?"

"I just saw the fiacre coming into the Rue du Petit Banquier. That is what made me run."

The man sprang up. There was a sort of illumination on his face.

"Wife!" cried he, "you here. Here is the philanthropist. Put out the fire."

He turned towards the younger girl, who was on the pallet near the window, and cried in a thundering voice:

"Quick! off the bed, good-for-nothing! will you never do anything? break a pane of glass."

The child, with a sort of terrified obedience, rose upon tip-toe, and struck her fist into a pane. The glass broke and fell

with a crash. But in breaking the glass she cut herself; she went to her mother's bed and wept in silence.

"You see now!" cried the mother, "what stupid things you are doing? breaking your glass, she has cut herself!"

"So much the better!" said the man. "I knew she would."

Then tearing the chemise which he had on, he made a bandage with which he hastily wrapped up the little girl's bleeding wrist.

"Do you know," resumed the father, "that it is as cold as a dog in this devilish garret? If this man should not come! The brute may have forgotten the address! I will bet that the old fool——"

Just then there was a light rap at the door; the man rushed forward and opened it, exclaiming with many low bows and smiles of adoration:

"Come in, Monsieur! deign to come in, my noble benefactor, as well as your charming young lady."

A man of mature age and a young girl appeared at the door of the garret.

Marius had not left his place. What he felt at that moment escapes human language.

It was She.

Whoever has loved, knows all the radiant meaning contained in the three letters of this word: She.

She was still accompanied by Monsieur Leblanc. He approached with his kind and compassionate look, and said to the father:

"Monsieur you will find in this package some new clothes, some stockings, and some new coverlids."

"Our angelic benefactor overwhelms us," said Jondrette, bowing down to the floor. Then, stooping to his eldest daughter's ear, while the two visitors were examining this lamentable abode, he added rapidly in a whisper: "Tell me, how was the letter to this old blubber-lip signed?"

"Fabantou," answered the daughter.

This was lucky for Jondrette, for at that very moment Monsieur Leblanc turned towards him and said to him, with the appearance of one who is trying to recollect a name:

"I see that you are indeed to be pitied, Monsieur——"

"Fabantou," said Jondrette quickly.

"Monsieur Fabantou, yes, that is it. I remember."

"Dramatic artist, Monsieur, and who has had his successes."

For some moments, Jondrette had been looking at "the philanthropist" in a strange manner. Even while speaking, he seemed to scrutinise him closely as if he were trying to recall some reminiscence. Suddenly, taking advantage of a moment

when the new-comers were anxiously questioning the smaller girl about her mutilated hand, he passed over to his wife who was lying in her bed, appearing to be overwhelmed and stupid, and said to her quickly and in a very low tone:

"Notice that man!"

Then turning towards M. Leblanc, and continuing his lamentation:

"You see, monsieur! my whole dress is nothing but a chemise of my wife's! and that all torn! in the heart of winter. I cannot go out for lack of a coat. Well, monsieur, my worthy monsieur, do you know what is going to happen to-morrow? To-morrow is the 4th of February, the fatal day, the last delay that my landlord will give me; if I do not pay him this evening, to-morrow we shall all four be turned out of doors, and driven off into the street, upon the boulevard, without shelter, into the rain, upon the snow. You see, monsieur, I owe four quarters, a year! that is sixty francs."

Jondrette lied. Four quarters would have made but forty francs, and he could not have owed for four, since it was not six months since Marius had paid for two.

M. Leblanc took five francs from his pocket and threw them on the table. He then took off a large brown overcoat, which he wore over his blue surtout, and hung it over the back of the chair.

"Monsieur Fabantou," said he, "I have only these five francs with me; but I am going to take my daughter home, and I will return this evening; is it not this evening that you have to pay?"

Jondrette's face lighted up with a strange expression. He answered quickly:

"Yes, my noble monsieur. At eight o'clock, I must be at my landlord's."

"I will be here at six o'clock, and I will bring you the sixty francs."

"O my patron," said Jondrette, "my noble benefactor, I am melting into tears! Allow me to conduct you to your carriage."

"If you go out," replied M. Leblanc, "put on this overcoat. It is really very cold."

Jondrette did not make him say it twice. He put on the brown overcoat very quickly.

And they went out, all three, Jondrette preceding the two strangers.

Marius, in the meantime, had lost nothing of all this scene, and yet in reality he had seen nothing of it. His eyes had remained fixed upon the young girl, his heart had, so to speak, seized upon her and enveloped her entirely, from her

first step into the garret. When the party left, he hurried down, and reached the boulevard in time to see a fiacre turn the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier and return into the city. Just at this moment, marvellous and unheard-of good fortune, Marius saw a public cab passing along the boulevard, empty. He made a sign to the driver to stop, and cried to him:

"Right away!"

Marius had no cravat, he had on his old working coat, some of the buttons of which were missing, and his shirt was torn in one of the plaits of the bosom.

The driver stopped, winked and reached his left hand towards Marius, rubbing his forefinger gently with his thumb.

"What?" said Marius.

"Pay in advance," said the driver.

Marius remembered that he had only sixteen sous with him.

"How much?" he asked.

"Forty sous."

"I will pay when I get back."

The driver made no reply but to whistle an air from "La Palisse" and whip up his horse.

Marius saw the cab move away with a bewildered air. For the want of twenty-four sous he was losing his joy, his happiness, his love! he was falling into night! he had seen, and he was again becoming blind. He thought bitterly, and it must indeed be said, with deep regret, of the five francs he had given that very morning to that miserable girl. Had he had those five francs he would have been saved, he would have been born again, he would have come out of limbo and darkness, he would have come out of his isolation, his spleen, his bereavement; he would have again knotted the black thread of his destiny with that beautiful golden thread which had just floated before his eyes and broken off once more. He returned to the old tenement in despair.

He might have thought that M. Leblanc had promised to return in the evening, and that he had only to take better care to follow him then; but in his rapt contemplation he hardly understood it.

Just as he went up the stairs, he noticed on the other side of the boulevard, beside the deserted wall of the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, Jondrette in the "philanthropist's" overcoat, talking to one of those men of dangerous appearance who, by common consent, are called "prowlers of the *barrières*"; men of equivocal faces, suspicious speech, who have an appearance of evil intentions, and who usually sleep by day, which leads us to suppose that they work by night.

Marius went into his room and pushed to his door behind him.

It did not close; he turned and saw a hand holding the door partly open.

"What is it?" he asked, "who is there?"

It was the Jondrette girl.

"Is it you?" said Marius almost harshly, "you again? What do you want of me?"

She seemed thoughtful and did not look at him. She had lost the assurance which she had had in the morning. She did not come in, but stopped in the dusky hall, where Marius perceived her through the half-open door.

"Come now, will you answer?" said Marius. "What is it you want of me?"

She raised her mournful eyes, in which a sort of confused light seemed to shine dimly, and said to him:

"Monsieur Marius, you look sad. What is the matter with you?"

"There is nothing the matter with me."

"Stop," said she, "you are wrong. Though you may not be rich, you were good this morning. You are troubled at something, that is plain. I do not want you to be troubled. What must be done for that? Can I serve you in anything? Let me. I do not ask your secrets, you need not tell them to me, but yet I may be useful. I can certainly help you, since I help my father. When it is necessary to carry letters, go into houses, inquire from door to door, find out an address, follow somebody, I do it. Now, you can certainly tell me what is the matter with you, I will go and speak to the persons; sometimes for somebody to speak to the persons is enough to understand things, and it is all arranged. Make use of me."

An idea came into Marius's mind. What straw do we despise when we feel that we are sinking?

"Listen," he said, "you brought an old gentleman here with his daughter. Do you know their address?"

"No."

"Find it for me."

The girl's eyes, which had been gloomy, had become joyful. They now became dark.

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"That is to say," said she, hastily, "you do not know her, but you want to know her."

This "them" which had become "her" had an indescribable significance and bitterness.

"Well, can you do it?" said Marius.

"You shall have the beautiful young lady's address."

There was again, in these words, "the beautiful young lady," an expression which made Marius uneasy.

He continued:

"Well, no matter! the address of the father and daughter. Their address, yes!"

She looked steadily at him.

"What will you give me?"

"Anything you wish!"

"You shall have the address."

She looked down, then with a movement closed the door.

Marius was alone. He dropped into a chair, with his head and both elbows on the bed, swallowed up in thoughts which he could not grasp, and as if he were in a fit of vertigo. Suddenly he was violently awakened from his reverie.

He heard the loud, harsh voice of Jondrette pronounce these words for him, full of the strangest interest:

"I tell you that I am sure of it, and that I recognised him!"

Of whom was Jondrette talking? He had recognised whom? M. Leblanc?—the father of "his Ursula?" What! did Jondrette know him? Was Marius just about to get in this sudden and unexpected way all the information, the lack of which made his life obscure to himself? Was he at last to know whom he loved, who this young girl was? who her father was? Was the thick shadow which enveloped them to be rolled away? was the veil to be rent? Oh, heavens!

He sprang, rather than mounted upon the bureau, and resumed his place near the little aperture in the partition.

Jondrette had evidently just come in. He had not yet recovered his regular breathing. His eyes had an extraordinary look.

The woman, who seemed timid and stricken with stupor before her husband, ventured to say to him:

"What, really? You are sure?"

"Sure! It was eight years ago, but I recognise him! And do you want I should tell you one thing? The young lady——"

"Well, what?" said the woman. "The young lady?"

Marius could doubt no longer. It was indeed of her that they were talking. He listened with an intense anxiety. His whole life was concentrated in his ears.

But Jondrette stooped down, and whispered to his wife. Then he straightened up and finished aloud:

"It is she!"

"That girl?" said the wife.

No words could express what there was in the *that girl* of

the mother. It was surprise, rage, hatred, anger mingled and combined in a monstrous intonation. She was a swine with the look of a tigress.

"What!" she resumed, "this horrible beautiful young lady who looked at my girls with an appearance of pity, can she be that beggar! Oh, I would like to stamp her heart out!"

She sprang off the bed and remained a moment standing, her hair flying, her nostrils distended, her mouth half open, her fists clenched and drawn back. Then she fell back upon the pallet. The man still walked back and forth, paying no attention to his female.

After a few moments of silence, he approached her and stopped before her, with folded arms, as before.

"And do you want I should tell you one thing?"

"What?" she asked.

He answered in a quick and low voice:

"My fortune is made. He is caught, the Cræsus! it is all right. It is already done. Everything is arranged. I have seen the men. He will come this evening at six o'clock. The girls will stand watch. You shall help us. He will be his own executioner."

"And if he should not be his own executioner," asked the wife.

Jondrette made a sinister gesture and said:

"We will execute him."

And he burst into a laugh.

It was the first time that Marius had seen him laugh. This laugh was cold and feeble, and made him shudder. All dreamer as he was, Marius was of a firm and energetic nature. It was into a viper's hole that he had just been looking; it was a nest of monsters that he had before his eyes.

He looked for a moment at the female Jondrette. She had pulled an old sheet-iron furnace out of a corner, and she was fumbling among the old iron.

He got down from the bureau as quietly as he could, taking care to make no noise. One o'clock had just struck, the ambushade was to be carried out at six. Marius had five hours before him.

There was but one thing to be done.

He put on his presentable coat, tied a cravat about his neck, took his hat, and went towards the Faubourg Saint Marceau. At the first shop in his way he asked where he could find a commissary of police.

Number 14, Rue de Pontoise, was pointed out to him.

On reaching Number 14, he went upstairs and asked for the commissary of police

"The commissary of police is not in," said one of the office boys; "but there is an inspector who answers for him. Would you like to speak to him? is it urgent?"

"Yes," said Marius.

The office boy introduced him into the commissary's private room. A man of tall stature was standing there, behind a railing, in front of a stove, and holding up with both hands the flaps of a huge overcoat with three capes. He had a square face, a thin and firm mouth, very fierce, bushy, greyish whiskers, and an eye that would turn your pockets inside out. You might have said of this eye, not that it penetrated, but that it ransacked.

Marius related his adventure.—That a person whom he only knew by sight was to be drawn into an ambushade that very evening; that, occupying the room next the place, he, Marius Pontmercy, attorney, had heard the whole plot through the partition; that the scoundrel who had contrived the plot was named Jondrette; that he had accomplices, probably prowlers of the *barrières*; and finally, that all this was to be done at six o'clock that evening, at the most desolate spot on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, in the house numbered 50-52.

At that number the inspector raised his head, and said coolly:

"No. 50-52. I know the shanty. Impossible to hide ourselves in the interior without the artists perceiving us, then they would leave and break up the play. They are so modest! the public annoys them. None of that, none of that. I want to hear them sing and make them dance."

This monologue finished, he turned towards Marius and plunged both his hands, which were enormous, into the two immense pockets of his overcoat, and took out two small steel pistols, of the kind called fisticuffs. He presented them to Marius, saying hastily and abruptly:

"Take these. Go back home. Hide yourself in your room, let them think you have gone out. They are loaded. When you deem the affair at a point, and when it is time to stop it, you will fire off a pistol. Not too soon. The rest is my affair. A pistol shot in the air, into the ceiling, no matter where. Forget nothing of what I have told you. Bang. A pistol shot."

"Be assured," answered Marius.

And as Marius placed his hand on the latch of the door to go out, the inspector called to him:

"By the way, if you need me between now and then, come or send here. You will ask for Inspector Javert."

CHAPTER VI

Marius sat down on his bed. A half-hour only separated him from what was to come. He heard his arteries beat as one hears the ticking of a watch in the dark. He thought of this double march that was going on at that moment in the darkness, crime advancing on the one hand, justice coming on the other. He was not afraid, but he could not think without a sort of shudder of the things which were so soon to take place. To him, as to all those whom some surprising adventure has suddenly befallen, this whole day seemed but a dream; and, to assure himself that he was not the prey of a nightmare, he had to feel the chill of the two steel pistols in his fob-pockets.

It was not now snowing; the moon, growing brighter and brighter, was getting clear of the haze, and its light, mingled with the white reflection from the fallen snow, gave the room a twilight appearance.

There was a light in the Jondrette den. Marius saw the hole in the partition shine with a red gleam which appeared to him bloody.

He was sure that this gleam could hardly be produced by a candle. However, there was no movement in their room, nobody was stirring there, nobody spoke, not a breath, the stillness was icy and deep, and save for that light he could have believed that he was beside a sepulchre.

Marius took his boots off softly, and pushed them under the bed.

Some minutes passed. Marius heard the lower door turn on its hinges; a heavy and rapid step ascended the stairs and passed along the corridor, the latch of the garret was noisily lifted; Jondrette came in.

Several voices were heard immediately. The whole family was in the garret. Only they kept silence in the absence of the master, like the cubs in the absence of the wolf.

"It is me," said he. "Are you sure there is nobody at home in our neighbour's room?"

"He has not been back to-day, and you know that it is his dinner-time."

A moment afterwards, Marius heard the sound of the bare feet of the two young girls in the passage, and the voice of Jondrette crying to them:

"Pay attention, now! one towards the *barrière*, the other at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier. Don't lose sight of the house door a minute, and if you see the least thing.

here immediately! tumble along! You have a key to come in with."

They went down the stairs, and, a few seconds afterwards, the sound of the lower door shutting announced that they had gone out.

Marius judged that the time had come to resume his place at his observatory. In a twinkling, and with the agility of his age, he was at the hole in the partition.

He looked in. A candle was burning in a verdigrised candlestick, but it was not that which really lighted the room. The entire den was, as it were, illuminated by the reflection of a large sheet-iron furnace in the fire-place, which was filled with lighted charcoal. The charcoal was burning and the furnace was red-hot, a blue flame danced over it and helped to show the form of a chisel, which was growing ruddy among the coals. In a corner near the door, and arranged as if for anticipated use, were two heaps which appeared to be, one a heap of old iron, the other a heap of ropes.

Jondrette arranged two chairs on the two sides of the table, turned the chisel over in the fire, put an old screen in front of the fireplace, which concealed the furnace, then went to the corner where the heap of ropes was, and stooped down, as if to examine something. Marius then perceived that what he had taken for a shapeless heap was a rope ladder, very well made, with wooden rounds, and two large hooks to hang it by.

Marius, for his part, grasped the pistol which was in his right fob-pocket, took it out, and cocked it.

Just then the distant and melancholy vibration of a bell shook the windows. Six o'clock struck on Saint Médard.

Jondrette marked each stroke with a nod of his head. At the sixth stroke he snuffed the candle with his fingers and returned to his chair.

He had hardly sat down when the door opened.

The mother Jondrette had opened it, and stood in the hall making a horrible, amiable grimace, which was lighted up from beneath by one of the holes of the dark lantern.

"Walk in," said she.

"Walk in, my benefactor," repeated Jondrette, rising precipitately.

Monsieur Leblanc appeared and laid four louis upon the table.

"Monsieur Fabantou," said he, "that is for your rent and your pressing wants. We will see about the rest."

"God reward you, my generous benefactor!" said Jondrette. Meanwhile Monsieur Leblanc had taken a seat.

"How does the poor little injured girl do?" he inquired.

"Badly," answered Jondrette, with a doleful yet grateful smile, "very badly, my worthy Monsieur. Her elder sister has taken her to the Bourbe to have her arm dressed. You will see them, they will be back directly."

"Madame Fabantou appears to me much better?" resumed Monsieur Leblanc, casting his eyes upon the grotesque accoutrement of the female Jondrette, who, standing between him and the door, as if she were already guarding the exit, was looking at him in a threatening and almost a defiant posture.

"She is dying," said Jondrette. "But you see, Monsieur! she has so much courage, that woman! She is not a woman, she is an ox."

The woman, touched by the compliment, retorted with the smirk of a flattered monster:

"You are always too kind to me, Monsieur Jondrette."

"Jondrette!" said M. Leblanc, "I thought that your name was Fabantou?"

"Fabantou or Jondrette!" replied the husband, hastily. "Sobriquet as an artist!"

And, directing a shrug of the shoulders towards his wife, which M. Leblanc did not see, he continued with an emphatic and caressing tone of voice:

"Ah! how well we have always got along together, this poor dear and I! What would be left to us, if it were not for that? Alas! we have nothing left from our days of prosperity! Nothing but one single thing, a painting, to which I cling, but yet which I shall have to part with, for we must live! item, we must live!"

He got up, went to the wall, at the foot of which stood a panel, and turned it round, still leaving it resting against the wall. Marius caught a glimpse of a coarse daub, with a sort of principal personage, coloured in the crude and glaring style of strolling panoramas and paintings upon screens.

"What is that?" asked M. Leblanc.

Jondrette exclaimed:

"A painting by a master; a picture of great price, my benefactor! I cling to it as to my two daughters, it calls up memories to me! but I have told you, and I cannot unsay it, I am so unfortunate that I would part with it."

Whether by chance, or whether there was some beginning of distrust, while examining the picture, M. Leblanc glanced towards the back of the room. There were four men there, three seated on the bed, one standing near the door-casing; all four bare-armed, motionless, and with blackened faces. One of those who were on the bed was leaning against the wall,

with his eyes closed, and one would have said he was asleep. This one was old; his white hair over his black face was horrible. The two others appeared young; one was bearded, the other had long hair. None of them had shoes on; those who did not have socks were barefooted.

Jondrette noticed that M. Leblanc's eyes were fixed upon these men.

"They are friends. They live near by," said he. "They are dark because they work in charcoal. They are chimney doctors. Do not occupy your mind with them, my benefactor, but buy my picture. Take pity on my misery. I shall not sell it to you at a high price. How much do you estimate it worth?"

"But," said M. Leblanc, looking Jondrette full in the face, and like a man who puts himself on his guard, "this is some tavern sign, it is worth about three francs."

Jondrette answered calmly:

"Have you your pocket-book here? I will be satisfied with a thousand crowns."

While speaking, Jondrette did not look at M. Leblanc, who was watching him. M. Leblanc's eye was fixed upon Jondrette, and Jondrette's eye upon the door. Suddenly his dull eye lighted up with a hideous glare, this little man straightened up and became horrifying. He took a step towards M. Leblanc and cried to him in a voice of thunder:

"But all that is not the question! Do you know me?"

The door of the garret had been suddenly flung open, disclosing three men in blue blouses with black paper masks. The first was spare and had a long iron-bound cudgel; the second, who was a sort of colossus, held by the middle of the handle, with the axe down, a butcher's pole-axe. The third, a broad-shouldered man, not so thin as the first nor so heavy as the second, held in his clenched fist an enormous key stolen from some prison door.

It appeared that it was the arrival of these men for which Jondrette was waiting. A rapid dialogue commenced between him and the man with the cudgel, the spare man.

"Is everything ready?" said Jondrette.

"Yes," answered the spare man.

"Where is Montparnasse, then?"

"The young primate stopped to chat with your daughter."

"Which one?"

"The elder."

"Is there a fiacre below?"

"Yes."

"The *maringotte* is ready?"

"Ready."

"With two good horses?"

"Excellent."

"It is waiting where I said it should wait?"

"Yes."

"Good," said Jondrette.

Marius thought that in a few seconds more the time would come to interfere, and he raised his right hand towards the ceiling in the direction of the hall, ready to let off his pistol-shot.

Jondrette, after his colloquy with the man who had the cudgel, turned again towards M. Leblanc and repeated his question, accompanying it with that low, smothered, and terrible laugh of his.

"You do not recognise me, then?"

M. Leblanc looked him in the face and answered:

"No."

Then Jondrette came up to the table. He leaned forward over the candle, folding his arms, and pushing his angular and ferocious jaws up towards the calm face of M. Leblanc, as nearly as he could without forcing him to draw back, and in that posture, like a wild beast just about to bite, he cried:

"My name is not Fabantou, my name is not Jondrette, my name is Thenardier! I am the innkeeper of Montfermeil! Do you understand me? Thenardier! Now do you know me?"

An imperceptible flush passed over M. Leblanc's forehead, and he answered without tremor or elevation of voice and with his usual placidity:

"No more than before."

Marius did not hear this answer. Could anybody have seen him at that moment in that darkness, he would have seen that he was haggard, astounded and thunderstruck. When Jondrette had said "My name is Thenardier," Marius had trembled in every limb, and supported himself against the wall as if he had felt the chill of a sword-blade through his heart. Then his right arm, which was just ready to fire the signal shot, dropped slowly down, and at the moment that Jondrette had repeated "Do you understand me? Thenardier?" Marius's nerveless fingers had almost dropped the pistol. Jondrette, in unveiling who he was, had not moved M. Leblanc, but he had completely unnerved Marius. That name of Thenardier, which M. Leblanc did not seem to know, Marius knew. Remember what that name was to him! That name he had worn on his heart, written in his father's will! He carried it in the innermost place of his thoughts, in the holiest spot of his memory, in that sacred command: "A man named Thenardier

saved my life. If my son should meet him, he will do him all the good he can."

Meanwhile Thenardier—we will call him by no other name henceforth—was walking to and fro before the table in a sort of bewilderment and frenzied triumph.

"Ha!" cried he, "I have found you again at last, Monsieur philanthropist! Monsieur threadbare millionaire! old marrow-bones! ha! you do not know me? no, it was not you who came to Montfermeil, to my inn, eight years ago, the night of Christmas 1823! it was not you who took away Fantine's child from my house! the Lark! I have got you! I licked your paws this morning. I will gnaw your heart to-night."

M. Leblanc did not interrupt him, but said when he stopped:

"I do not know what you mean. You are mistaken. I am a very poor man and anything but a millionaire. I do not know you; you mistake me for another."

"Ha!" screamed Thenardier, "good mountebank! You stick to that joke yet! You are in the fog, my old boy! Ah! you do not remember! I am no doubtful man. I am not a man whose name nobody knows, and who comes into houses to carry off children. I am an old French soldier; I ought to be decorated. I was at Waterloo, I was, and in that battle I saved a general, named the Comte de Pontmercy. And now that I have had the goodness to tell you all this, let us make an end of it; I must have some money; I must have a good deal of money, I must have an immense deal of money, or I will exterminate you, by the thunder of God!"

Marius had regained some control over his distress, and was listening. The last possibility of doubt had now vanished. It was indeed the Thenardier of the will.

When Thenardier had taken breath, he fixed his bloodshot eyes upon Monsieur Leblanc, and said in a low and abrupt tone:

"What have you to say before we begin the dance with you?"

Monsieur Leblanc said nothing. In the midst of this silence a hoarse voice threw in this ghastly sarcasm from the hall:

"If there is any wood to split, I am on hand!"

It was the man with the pole-axe who was making merry.

At the same time a huge face, bristly and dirty, appeared in the doorway, with a hideous laugh, which showed not teeth, but fangs.

It was the face of the man with the pole-axe.

"What have you taken off your mask for?" cried Thenardier, furiously.

"To laugh," replied the man.

For some moments, Monsieur Leblanc had seemed to follow and to watch all the movements of Thenardier, who, blinded and bewildered by his own rage, was walking to and fro in the den with the confidence inspired by the feeling that the door was guarded, having armed possession of a disarmed man, and being nine to one, even if the Thenardiess should count for but one man. In his apostrophe to the man with the pole-axe, he turned his back to Monsieur Leblanc.

Monsieur Leblanc seized this opportunity, pushed the chair away with his foot, the table with his hand, and at one bound, with a marvellous agility, before Thenardier had time to turn around, he was at the window. To open it, get up and step through it, was the work of a second. He was half outside, when six strong hands seized him, and drew him forcibly back into the room. The three "chimney doctors" had thrown themselves upon him. At the same time the Thenardiess had clutched him by the hair.

Marius could not endure this sight. "Father," thought he, "pardon me!" And his finger sought the trigger of the pistol. The shot was just about to be fired, when Thenardier's voice cried:

"Do him no harm!"

A herculean struggle had commenced. With one blow full in the chest M. Leblanc, had sent one man sprawling into the middle of the room, then with two back strokes had knocked down two other assailants, whom he held one under each knee; the wretches screamed under the pressure as if they had been under a granite mill-stone; but the four others had seized the formidable old man by the arms and the back, and held him down over the two prostrate "chimney doctors." Thus, master of the latter and mastered by the former, crushing those below him and suffocating under those above him, vainly endeavouring to shake off all the violence and blows which were heaped upon him, M. Leblanc disappeared under the horrible group of the bandits, like a wild boar under a howling pack of hounds and mastiffs.

They succeeded in throwing him over upon the bed nearest to the window, and held him there in awe. The Thenardiess had not let go of his hair.

"Here," said Thenardier, "let it alone. You will tear your shawl."

The Thenardiess obeyed, as the she-wolf obeys her mate, with a growl.

"Now, the rest of you," continued Thenardier, "search him."

M. Leblanc seemed to have given up all resistance. They searched him. There was nothing upon him but a leather purse, which contained six francs, and his handkerchief.

Thenardier put the handkerchief in his pocket.

"What! No pocket-book?" he asked.

"Nor any watch," answered one of the "chimney doctors."

"It is all the same," muttered—with the voice of a ventriloquist—the masked man who had the big key; "he is an old rough."

Thenardier went to the corner by the door and took a bundle of ropes, which he threw to them.

"Tie him to the foot of the bed," said he; and, with a gesture, dismissing the brigands, who still had their hands upon M. Leblanc:

"Move off a little, and let me talk with Monsieur."

They all retired towards the door. He resumed:

"Monsieur, you were wrong in trying to jump out of the window. You might have broken your leg. Now, if you please, let us arrange this amicably. I was wrong to fly into a passion just now. I do not know where my wits were. I went much too far, I talked extravagantly. Here, I am willing to go half-way and make some sacrifice on my part. I need only two hundred thousand francs. You will say: But I have not two hundred thousand francs with me. Oh! I am not exacting. I do not require that. I only ask one thing. Have the goodness to write what I shall dictate."

Thenardier pushed the table close up to Monsieur Leblanc, and took the inkstand, a pen and a sheet of paper from the drawer, which he left partly open, and from which gleamed the long blade of a knife.

He laid the sheet of paper before Monsieur Leblanc.

"Write," said he.

"What?" asked the prisoner.

"I will dictate."

M. Leblanc took the pen.

Thenardier dictated:

"My dear daughter, come immediately, I have imperative need of you. The person who will give you this letter is directed to bring you to me."

The prisoner laid down the pen and asked:

"For whom is this letter?"

"You know very well," answered Thenardier. "I have spoken of 'the Lark', have I not? Sign it. What is your name?"

"Urbain Fabre," said the prisoner. He remained thoughtful for a moment, then he took the pen and wrote:

"Mademoiselle Fabre, at Monsieur Urbain Fabre's, Rue Saint Dominique d'Enfer, No. 17."

Thenardier seized the letter with a sort of feverish convulsive movement.

"Wife!" cried he.

The Thenardiess sprang forward.

"Here is the letter. You know what you have to do. There is a fiacre below. Go right away, and above all things do not lose the letter!"

The harsh voice of the Thenardiess answered:

"Rest assured, I have put it in my bosom."

Marius was waiting in an anxiety which everything increased. The riddle was more impenetrable than ever. Who was this "little girl" whom Thenardier had also called the Lark? Was it his "Ursula"? The prisoner had not seemed to be moved by this word, the Lark, and answered in the most natural way in the world: I do not know what you mean. On the other hand, the two letters U. F. were explained; it was Urbain Fabre, and Ursula's name was no longer Ursula. This Marius saw most clearly. A sort of hideous fascination held him spellbound to the place from which he observed and commanded this whole scene. There he was, almost incapable of reflection and motion, as if annihilated by such horrible things in so close proximity. He was waiting, hoping for some movement, no matter what, unable to collect his ideas, and not knowing what course to take.

"At all events," said he, "if the Lark is she, I shall certainly see her, for the Thenardiess is going to bring her here. Then all will be plain. I will give my blood and my life if need be, but I will deliver her. Nothing shall stop me."

Nearly half-an-hour passed thus. Thenardier appeared absorbed in a dark meditation; the prisoner did not stir. Nevertheless Marius thought he heard at intervals and for some moments a little dull noise from the direction of the prisoner.

Suddenly Thenardier addressed the prisoner:

"Monsieur Fabre, here, so much let me tell you at once. My spouse is coming back, do not be impatient. There is somewhere outside one of the barriers a *maringotte* with two very good horses harnessed. They will take your young lady there. She will get out of the carriage. My comrade will get into the *maringotte* with her, and my wife will come back here to tell us: 'It is done.' As to your young lady, no harm will be done her; the *maringotte* will take her to a place where she will be quiet, and as soon as you have given me the little two hundred thousand francs, she will be sent back to you. If

you have me arrested, my comrade will give the Lark a pinch, that is all. There will be no harm done unless you wish there should be. As soon as my spouse has got back and said: 'The Lark is on her way,' we will release you, and you will be free to go home to bed. You see that we have no bad intentions."

Appalling images passed before Marius's mind. What! this young girl whom they were kidnapping, they were not going to bring her here? What was he to do? Fire off the pistol? put all these wretches into the hands of justice? But the hideous man would none the less be out of all reach with the young girl, and Marius remembered these words of Thenardier, the bloody signification of which he divined: "If you have me arrested, my comrade will give the Lark a pinch."

Now it was not by the Colonel's will alone, it was by his love itself, by the peril of her whom he loved, that he felt himself held back. The tumult of his thoughts strangely contrasted with the deathly silence of the den.

In the midst of this silence they heard the sound of the door of the stairway which opened, then closed.

The prisoner made a movement in his bonds.

"Here is the bourgeoisie," said Thenardier.

He had hardly said this, when, in fact, the Thenardiess burst into the room, red, breathless, panting, with glaring eyes, and cried, striking her big hands upon hips both at the same time:

"False address! No Monsieur Fabre! Rue Saint Dominique, full gallop, and drink-money to the driver and all! I spoke to the porter and the portress, who is a fine stout woman, they did not know the fellow."

Marius breathed. She, Ursula or the Lark, she whom he no longer knew what to call, was safe.

While his exasperated wife was vociferating, Thenardier had seated himself on the table; he sat a few seconds without saying a word, swinging his right leg, which was hanging down, and gazing upon the furnace with a look of savage reverie.

At last he said to the prisoner with a slow and singularly ferocious inflection:

"A false address! what did you hope for by that?"

"To gain time!" cried the prisoner, with a ringing voice.

And at the same moment he shook off his bonds; they were cut. The prisoner was no longer fastened to the bed save by one leg.

Before the seven men had had time to recover themselves and to spring upon him, he had bent over to the fireplace,

reached his hand towards the furnace, then rose up, and now Thenardier, the Thenardiess and the bandits, thrown, by the shock into the back part of the room, beheld him with stupefaction, holding above his head the glowing chisel, from which fell an ominous light, almost free and in a formidable attitude.

At the judicial inquest, to which the ambushade in the Gorbeau tenement gave rise in the sequel, it appeared that a big sou, cut and worked in a peculiar fashion, was found in the garret, when the police made a descent upon it; this big sou was one of those marvels of labour which the patience of the galleys produces in the darkness and for the darkness, marvels which are nothing else but instruments of escape. A big sou of this kind, on subsequent examination by the police, was found open and in two pieces in the room under the pallet near the window. There was also discovered a little saw of blue steel which could be concealed in the big sou. It would explain the slight noise and the imperceptible movements which Marius had noticed.

The prisoner now raised his voice:

"You are pitiable, but my life is not worth the trouble of so long a defence. As to your imagining that you could make me speak, that you could make me write what I do not wish to write, that you could make me say what I do not wish to say——"

He pulled up the sleeve of his left arm, and added:

"Here."

At the same time he extended his arm, and laid upon the naked flesh the glowing chisel, which he held in his right hand by the wooden handle.

They heard the hissing of the burning flesh; the odour peculiar to chambers of torture spread through the den. Marius staggered, lost in horror: the brigands themselves felt a shudder; the face of the wonderful old man hardly contracted, and while the red iron was sinking into the smoking, impassible, and almost august wound, he turned upon Thenardier his fine face, in which there was no hatred, and in which suffering was swallowed up in a serene majesty.

With great and lofty natures the revolt of the flesh and the senses against the assault of physical pain brings out the soul, and makes it appear on the countenance in the same way as mutinies of the soldiery force the captain to show himself.

"Wretches," said he, "have no more fear for me than I have of you."

And drawing the chisel out of the wound, he threw it through the window, which was still open; the horrible glow-

ing tool disappeared, whirling into the night, and fell in the distance, and was quenched in the snow.

The prisoner resumed:

"Do with me what you will."

He was disarmed.

"Lay hold of him," said Thenardier.

Two of the brigands laid their hands upon his shoulders, and the masked man with the ventriloquist's voice placed himself in front of him, ready to knock out his brains with the blow of the key at the least motion.

At the same time Marius heard beneath him, at the foot of the partition, but so near that he could not see those who were talking, this colloquy, exchanged in a low voice:

"There is only one thing more to do."

"To kill him!"

"That is it."

It was the husband and wife who were holding counsel.

Thenardier walked with slow steps towards the table, opened the drawer and took out a knife.

Marius was tormenting the trigger of his pistol. The peril was now urgent, the last limit of hope was passed; at a few steps from the prisoner Thenardier was reflecting, with the knife in his hand.

Marius cast his eyes wildly about him; the last mechanical resource of despair.

Suddenly he started.

At his feet, on the table, a clear ray of the full moon illuminated, and seemed to point out to him, a sheet of paper. Upon that sheet he read this line, written in large letters that very morning by the elder of the Thenardier girls:

"THE COGNES ARE HERE."

An idea, a flash, crossed Marius's mind: that was the means which he sought; the solution of this dreadful problem which was torturing him, to spare the assassin and to save the victim. He knelt down upon his bureau, reached out his arm, caught up the sheet of paper, quietly detached a bit of plaster from the partition, wrapped it in the paper, and threw the whole through the crevice into the middle of the den.

It was time. Thenardier had conquered his last fears, or his last scruples, and was moving towards the prisoner.

"Something fell!" cried the Thenardiess.

"What is it?" said the husband.

The woman had sprung forward, and picked up the piece of plaster wrapped in the paper. She handed it to her husband.

"How did this come in?" asked Thenardier.

"Egad!" said the woman, "how do you suppose it got in. It came through the window."

Thenardier hurriedly unfolded the paper, and held it up to the candle.

"It is Eponine's writing. The devil! Quick! the ladder! leave the meat in the trap and clear the camp!"

"Without cutting the man's throat?" asked the Thenardiess.

"We have not the time."

The brigands, who were holding the prisoner, let go of him; in the twinkling of an eye, the rope ladder was unrolled out of the window, and firmly fixed to the casing by the two iron hooks.

The prisoner paid no attention to what was passing about him. He seemed to be dreaming or praying.

As soon as the ladder was fixed, Thenardier cried:

"Come, bourgeoisie!"

And he rushed towards the window.

"After us!" howled the bandits.

"You are children," said Thenardier. "We are losing time. The *railles* are at our heels.

"Well," said one of the bandits, "let us draw lots who shall go out first."

Thenardier exclaimed:

"Are you fools? are you cracked? You are a mess of *jobards*! Losing time, isn't it? drawing lots, isn't it? with a wet finger! for the short straw! write our names! put them in a cap!—"

"Would you like my hat?" cried a voice from the door.

They all turned round. It was Javert.

He had come at the right time.

The frightened bandits had rushed for the arms which they had thrown down anywhere when they had attempted to escape. In less than a second, these seven men, terrible to look upon, were grouped in a posture of defence; one with his pole-axe, another with his key, a third with his club, the others with the shears, the pincers and the hammers, Thenardier grasping his knife. The Thenardiess seized a huge paving-stone which was in the corner of the window, and which served her daughters for a cricket.

Javert put on his hat again, and stepped into the room, his arms folded, his cane under his arm, his sword in its sheath.

"Halt, there," said he. "You will not pass out through the window, you will pass out through the door. It is less unwholesome. There are seven of you, fifteen of us. Don't collar us like Auvergnats. Be genteel."

A squad of sergeants de ville, with drawn swords, and officers

armed with axes and clubs, rushed in at Javert's call. They bound the bandits. This crowd of men, dimly lighted by a candle, filled the den with shadow.

"Handcuffs on all!" cried Javert.

"Come on, then!" cried a voice which was not a man's voice, but of which nobody could have said: "It is the voice of a woman."

The Thenardiess had entrenched herself in one of the corners of the window, and it was she who had just uttered this roar.

The sergeants de ville and officers fell back.

She had thrown off her shawl, but kept on her hat; her husband, crouched down behind her, was almost hidden beneath the fallen shawl, and she covered him with her body, holding the paving-stone with both hands above her head with the poise of a giantess who is going to hurl a rock.

"Take care!" she cried.

They all crowded back towards the hall. A wide space was left in the middle of the garret.

The Thenardiess cast a glance at the bandits who had allowed themselves to be tied, and muttered in a harsh and guttural tone:

"The cowards!"

Javert smiled, and advanced into the open space which the Thenardiess was watching with all her eyes.

"Don't come near! get out," cried she, "or I will crush you!"

"What a grenadier!" said Javert; "mother, you have a beard like a man, but I have claws like a woman."

And he continued to advance.

The Thenardiess, her hair flying wildly and terrible, braced her legs, bent backwards, and threw the paving-stone wildly at Javert's head. Javert stooped, the stone passed over him, hit the wall behind, from which it knocked down a large piece of the plastering, and returned, bounding from corner to corner across the room, luckily almost empty, finally stopping at Javert's heels.

At that moment Javert reached the Thenardier couple. One of his huge hands fell upon the shoulder of the woman and the other upon her husband's head.

"The handcuffs!" cried he.

The police officers returned in a body, and in a few seconds Javert's order was executed.

The Thenardiess, completely crushed, looked at her manacled hands and those of her husband, dropped to the floor and exclaimed, with tears in her eyes:

"My daughters!"

"They are provided for," said Javert.

The six manacled bandits were standing; however, they still retained their spectral appearance, three blackened, three masked.

"Keep on your masks," said Javert.

And, passing them in review with the eye of a Frederic II at parade at Potsdam, he said to three "chimney doctors":

"Good-day, Bigrenaille. Good-day, Brujon. Good-day, Deux Milliards."

Then, turning towards the three masks, he said to the man of the pole-axe:

"Good-day, Gueulemer."

And to the man of the cudgel:

"Good-day, Babet."

And to the ventriloquist:

"Your health, Claquesous."

Just then he perceived the prisoner of the bandits, who, since the entrance of the police, had not uttered a word, and had held his head down.

"Untie Monsieur!" said Javert, "and let nobody go out."

This said, he sat down with authority before the table, on which the candle and the writing materials still were, drew a stamped sheet from his pocket, and commenced his *procès-verbal*.

When he had written the first lines, a part of the formula, which is always the same, he raised his eyes:

"Bring forward the gentleman whom these gentlemen had bound."

The officers looked about them.

"Well," asked Javert, "where is he now?"

The prisoner of the bandits, M. Leblanc, M. Urbain Fabre, the father of Ursula, or the Lark, had disappeared.

The door was guarded, but the window was not. As soon as he saw that he was unbound, and while Javert was writing, he had taken advantage of the disturbance, the tumult, the confusion, the obscurity, and a moment when their attention was not fixed upon him, to leap out of the window.

An officer ran to the window, and looked out; nobody could be seen outside.

The rope ladder was still trembling.

"The devil!" said Javert, between his teeth, "that must have been the best one."

CHAPTER VII

Marius had seen the unexpected *dénouement* of the ambushade upon the track of which he had put Javert; but hardly had Javert left the old ruin, carrying away his prisoners in three coaches, when Marius also slipped out of the house. It was only nine o'clock in the evening. Marius went to Courfeyrac's. Courfeyrac was no longer the imperturbable inhabitant of the Latin Quarter; he had gone to live in the Rue de la Verrerie "for political reasons"; this quartier was one of those in which the insurrection was fond of installing itself in those days. Marius said to Courfeyrac: "I have come to sleep with you." Courfeyrac drew a mattress from his bed, where there were two, laid it on the floor, and said: "There you are."

The next day, by seven o'clock in the morning, Marius went back to the tenement, paid his rent, had his books, bed, table, bureau and his two chairs loaded upon a hand-cart, and went off without leaving his address.

A month rolled away, then another. Marius was still with Courfeyrac. He knew from a young attorney, an habitual attendant in the anterooms of the court, that Thenardier was in solitary confinement. Every Monday Marius sent to the clerk of La Force five francs for Thenardier.

Marius, having now no money, borrowed the five francs of Courfeyrac. It was the first time in his life that he had borrowed money. This periodical five francs was a double enigma, to Courfeyrac who furnished them, and to Thenardier who received them. "To whom can it go?" thought Courfeyrac. "Where can it come from?" Thenardier asked himself.

The bandits were awaiting trial. One, Claquesous, had mysteriously escaped on the way to La Force on the night of the capture. Javert's triumph in the Gorbeau tenement had seemed complete, but it was not so. His principal regret, however, was that he had not made the prisoner prisoner. The victim who slips away is more suspicious than the assassin; and it was probable that this personage, so precious a capture to the bandits, would be a not less valuable prize to the authorities.

As to Marius, "that dolt of a lawyer," who was "probably frightened," and whose name Javert had forgotten, Javert cared little for him. Besides, he was a lawyer, they are always found again.

The proofs in the prosecution of Thenardier failing in regard to his daughters, Eponine and Azelma were released, and it happened that one day as Marius was walking in the Boulevard de la Santé, he heard a voice which was known to him, say:

"Ah! there he is!"

He raised his eyes and recognised the unfortunate child who had come to his room one morning, the elder of the Thenardier girls, Eponine; he now knew her name. Singular fact, she had become more wretched and more beautiful, two steps which seemed impossible. She had accomplished a double progress towards the light and towards distress. She was barefooted and in rags, as on the day when she had so resolutely entered his room, only her rags were two months older; the holes were larger, the tatters dirtier. It was the same rough voice, the same forehead tanned and wrinkled by exposure; the same free, wild and wandering gaze. She had, in addition to her former expression, that mixture of fear and sorrow which the experience of a prison adds to misery.

She had spears of straw and grass in her hair, not like Ophelia from having gone mad through the contagion of Hamlet's madness, but because she had slept in some stable loft.

And with all this, she was beautiful. What a star thou art, O youth!

Meantime, she had stopped before Marius, with an expression of pleasure upon her livid face, and something which resembled a smile.

She stood for a few seconds, as if she could not speak:

"I have found you, then?" said she at last. "How I have looked for you! if you only knew? Do you know? I have been in the jug. A fortnight! They have let me out! seeing that there was nothing against me, and then I was not of the age of discernment. It lacked two months. Oh, how I have looked for you! it is six weeks now. You don't live down there any longer?"

"No," said Marius.

"Oh! I understand. On account of the affair. Such scares are disagreeable. You have moved. What! why do you wear such an old hat as that? a young man like you ought to have fine clothes. But tell me, where do you live now?"

Marius did not answer.

"Ah!" she continued, "you have a hole in your shirt. I must mend it for you."

She resumed with an expression which gradually grew darker:

"You don't seem to be glad to see me?"

Marius said nothing; she herself was silent for a moment, then exclaimed:

"But if I would, I could easily make you glad!"

"How?" inquired Marius. "What does that mean?"

"Ah! you used to speak more kindly to me!" replied she.

"Well, what is it that you mean?"

She bit her lip; she seemed to hesitate, as if passing through a kind of interior struggle. At last, she appeared to decide upon her course.

"So much the worse, it makes no difference. You look sad, I want you to be glad. But promise me that you will laugh, I want to see you laugh and hear you say: Ah, well! that is good. Poor Monsieur Marius! you know, you promised me that you would give me whatever I should ask——"

"Yes! but tell me!"

She looked into Marius's eyes and said:

"I have the address of the young lady!"

Marius sprang up from the bank on which he was sitting, and took her wildly by the hand.

"Oh! come! show me the way, tell me! ask me for whatever you will! Where is it?"

"Come with me," she answered. "I am not sure of the street and the number; it is away on the other side from here, but I know the house very well. I will show you."

She withdrew her hand, and added in a tone which would have pierced the heart of an observer, but which did not even touch the intoxicated and transported Marius:

"Oh! how glad you are!"

After a few steps she stopped.

"You follow too near me, Monsieur Marius. Let me go forward, and follow me like that, without seeming to. It won't do for a fine young man like you to be seen with a woman like me."

No tongue could tell all that there was in that word, woman, thus uttered by this child.

She went on a few steps and stopped again; Marius rejoining her. She spoke to him aside and without turning:

"By the way, you know, you have promised me something?"

Marius fumbled in his pocket. He had nothing in the world but the five francs intended for Thenardier. He took it, and put it into Eponine's hand.

She opened her fingers and let the piece fall on the ground, and, looking at him with a gloomy look:

"I don't want your money," said she, and walked sullenly ahead in the direction of the Ruc Plumet.

It will now be necessary to explain why Jean Valjean had left the convent of the Petit Picpus. As we remember, Jean Valjean was happy in the convent, so happy that his conscience at last began to be troubled. He saw Cosette every day, he felt paternity springing up and developing within him more and more, he brooded this child with his soul, he said to himself that she was his, that nothing could take her from him, that this would be so indefinitely, that certainly she would become a nun, being every day gently led on towards it, that thus the convent was henceforth the universe to her as well as to him, that he would grow old there and she would grow up there, that she would grow old there and he would die there; that finally—ravishing hope—no separation was possible. In reflecting upon this, he at last began to find difficulties. He questioned himself. He asked himself if all this happiness were really his own, if it were not made up of the happiness of another, of the happiness of this child whom he was appropriating and plundering, he, an old man; if this was not a robbery? He said to himself that this child had a right to know what life was before renouncing it; that to cut her off in advance, and in some sort without consulting her, from all pleasure, under pretence of saving her from all trial, to take advantage of her ignorance and isolation to give her an artificial vocation, was to outrage a human creature and to lie to God. And who knows but, thinking over all this some day, and being a nun with regret, Cosette might come to hate him?—a final thought, which was almost selfish and less heroic than the others, but which was insupportable to him. He resolved to leave the convent.

As to Cosette's education, it was almost finished and complete.

His determination once formed, he awaited an opportunity. It was not slow to present itself. Old Fauchelevent died.

Jean Valjean asked an audience of the reverend prioress, and told her that having received a small inheritance on the death of his brother, which enabled him to live henceforth without labour, he would leave the service of the convent and take away his daughter; but that, as it was not just that Cosette, not taking her vows, should have been educated gratuitously, he humbly begged the reverend prioress to allow him to offer the community, as an indemnity for the five years which Cosette had passed there, the sum of five thousand francs.

Thus Jean Valjean left the convent of the Perpetual Adoration.

On leaving the convent he took in his own hands, and would not entrust to any assistant, the little box the key of which

he always had about him. This box puzzled Cosette, on account of the odour of embalming which came from it.

Let us say at once that henceforth this box never left him more. He always had it in his room. It was the first and sometimes the only thing that he carried away in his changes of abode. Cosette laughed about it, and called this box "the inseparable," saying: "I am jealous of it."

Jean Valjean nevertheless did not appear again in the open city without deep anxiety.

He discovered a house in the Rue Plumet, and buried himself in it with Cosette and an old servant named Madame Toussaint. The house had a back entrance on the Rue de Babylone, out of which these three always came in or went out. Valjean was henceforth in possession of the name of *Ultimus Fauchelevant*.

At the same time he hired two other lodgings in Paris, in order to attract less attention than if he always remained in the same quartier, to be able to change his abode on occasion at the slightest anxiety which he might feel, and finally, that he might not again find himself in such a strait as on the night when he had so miraculously escaped from Javert. These two lodgings were two very humble dwellings, and of a poor appearance, in two quartiers widely distant from each other—one in the Rue de l'Ouest, the other in the Rue de l'Homme Armé.

He went from time to time now to the Rue de l'Homme Armé and now to the Rue de l'Ouest, to spend a month or six weeks with Cosette, without taking Toussaint. He was waited upon by the porters, and gave himself out for a man of some means of the suburbs having a foothold in the city. This lofty virtue had three domiciles in Paris in order to escape from the police.

Cosette, in her seclusion, like Marius in his, was all ready to take fire. Destiny, with its mysterious and fatal patience, was slowly bringing these two beings near each other, fully charged and all languishing with the stormy electricities of passion—these two souls which held love as two clouds hold lightning, and which were to meet and mingle in a glance like clouds in a flash.

The power of a glance has been so much abused in love stories, that it has come to be disbelieved in. Few people dare now to say that two beings have fallen in love because they have looked at each other. Yet it is in this way that love begins, and in this way only. The rest is only the rest, and comes afterwards. Nothing is more real than these great

shocks which two souls give each other in exchanging this spark.

At that particular moment when Cosette unconsciously looked with this glance which so affected Marius, Marius had no suspicion that he also had a glance which affected Cosette.

She received from him the same harm and the same blessing.

For a long time now she had seen and scrutinised him as young girls scrutinise and see, while looking another way. Marius still thought Cosette ugly, while Cosette already began to think Marius beautiful. But as he paid no attention to her, this young man was quite indifferent to her.

Still she could not help saying to herself that he had beautiful hair, beautiful eyes, beautiful teeth, a charming voice, when she heard him talking with his comrades; that he walked with an awkward gait, if you will, but with a grace of his own; that he did not appear altogether stupid; that his whole person was noble, gentle, natural and proud, and finally that he had a poor appearance, but that he had a good appearance.

Nature silently warned Jean Valjean of the presence of Marius. "Ah!" he thought. "What does he want? an amour! an amour!—and as for me! What! I, after having been the most miserable of men, shall be the most unfortunate; I shall have spent sixty years of life upon my knees; I shall have suffered all that a man can suffer! I shall have grown old without having been young; I shall have lived with no family, no relatives, no friends, no wife, no children. I shall have left my blood on every stone, on every thorn, on every post, along every wall: I shall have been mild, although the world was harsh to me, and good, although it was evil; I shall have become an honest man in spite of all; I shall have repented of the wrong which I have done, and pardoned the wrongs which have been done to me, and the moment that I am rewarded, the moment that it is over, the moment that I reach the end, the moment that I have what I desire, rightfully and justly; I have paid for it, I have earned it; it will all disappear, it will all vanish, and I shall lose Cosette, and I shall lose my life, my joy, my soul, because a great booby has been pleased to come and lounge about the Luxembourg."

Then his eyes filled with a strange and dismal light. It was no longer a man looking upon a man; it was not an enemy looking upon an enemy. It was a dog looking upon a robber.

We know the rest. The insanity of Marius continued. One day he followed Cosette to the Rue de l'Ouest. Another day he spoke to the porter; the porter in turn spoke, and said to Jean Valjean: "Monsieur, who is that curious young man

who has been asking for you?" The next day Jean Valjean cast that glance at Marius which Marius finally perceived. A week after, Jean Valjean had moved. He resolved that he would never set his foot again either in the Luxembourg or in the Rue de l'Ouest. He returned to the Rue Plumet.

Cosette did not complain, she said nothing, she asked no questions, she did not seek to know any reason; she was already at that point at which one fears discovery and self-betrayal. Jean Valjean had no experience of this misery, the only misery which is charming, and the only misery which he did not know; for this reason he did not understand the deep significance of Cosette's silence. He noticed only that she had become sad, and he became gloomy. There was on either side an armed inexperience. Once he made a trial. He asked Cosette:

"Would you like to go to the Luxembourg?"

A light illumined Cosette's pale face.

"Yes," said she.

They went. Three months had passed. Marius went there no longer. Marius was not there.

The next day, Jean Valjean asked Cosette again:

"Would you like to go to the Luxembourg?"

She answered sadly and quietly:

"No."

Jean Valjean was hurt by this sadness, and harrowed by this gentleness.

What was taking place in this spirit, so young, and already so impenetrable? What was in course of accomplishment in it? what was happening to Cosette's soul? Sometimes, instead of going to bed, Jean Valjean sat by his bedside with his head in his hands, and he spent whole nights asking himself: "What is there in Cosette's mind?" and thinking what things she could be thinking about.

Still nothing of this was exhibited towards Cosette; neither capriciousness nor severity. Always the same serene and kind face. Jean Valjean's manner was more tender and more paternal than ever. If anything could have raised a suspicion that there was less happiness, it was the greater gentleness.

For her part, Cosette was languishing. She suffered from the absence of Marius, as she had rejoiced in his presence, in a peculiar way, without really knowing it. When Jean Valjean ceased to take her on their usual walk, her woman's instinct murmured confusedly in the depths of her heart that she must not appear to cling to the Luxembourg; and that if it were indifferent to her, her father would take her back there. But days, weeks and months passed away. Jean

Valjean had tacitly accepted Cosette's tacit consent. She regretted it. It was too late. The day she returned to the Luxembourg, Marius was no longer there. Marius, then, had disappeared; it was all over; what could she do? Would she ever find him again? She felt a constriction of her heart, which nothing relaxed, and which was increasing every day; she no longer knew whether it was winter or summer, sunshine or rain, whether the birds sang, whether it was the season for dahlias or daisies, whether the Luxembourg was more charming than the Tuileries, whether the linen which the washerwoman brought home was starched too much or not enough, whether Toussaint did her "marketing" well or ill; and she became dejected, absorbed, intent upon a single thought, her eye wild and fixed, as when one looks into the night at the deep black place where an apparition has vanished.

Still she did not let Jean Valjean see anything, except her paleness. She kept her face sweet for him.

This paleness was more than sufficient to make Jean Valjean anxious. Sometimes he asked her:

"What is the matter with you?"

She answered:

"Nothing."

And, after a silence, as she felt that he was sad also, she continued:

"And you, father, is not something the matter with you?"

"Me? nothing," said he.

These two beings, who had loved each other so exclusively, and with so touching a love, and who had lived so long for each other, were now suffering each other, and through each other—without speaking of it, without feeling, and smiling the while.

One October morning, tempted by the deep serenity of the autumn of 1831, they had gone out, and found themselves at daybreak near the Barrière du Maine. Suddenly, Cosette exclaimed: "Father, I should think somebody was coming down there." Jean Valjean looked up.

Cosette was right. Seven waggons were moving in file upon the road. Six of them were of a peculiar structure. They resembled coopers' drays; they were a sort of long ladder placed upon two wheels, forming thills at the forward end. Each dray, or, better, each ladder, was drawn by four horses tandem. Upon these ladders strange clusters of men were carried. In the little light that there was, these men were not seen. they were only guessed. Twenty-four on each waggon, twelve on each side, back to back, their faces towards the passers-by, their legs hanging down, these men were

travelling thus; and they had behind them something which clanked and which was a chain, and at their necks something which shone and which was an iron collar. Each had his collar, but the chain was for all; so that these twenty-four men, if they should chance to get down from the dray and walk, would be made subject to a sort of inexorable unity, and have to wriggle over the ground with the chain for a backbone, very much like centipedes. In front and rear of each waggon, two men, armed with muskets, stood, each having an end of the chain under his foot. The collars were square. The seventh waggon, a huge cart with racks, but without a cover, had four wheels and six horses, and carried a resounding pile of iron kettles, melting-pots, furnaces, and chains, over which were scattered a number of men who were bound and lying at full length, and who appeared to be sick. This cart, entirely exposed to view, was furnished with broken hurdles which seemed to have served in the ancient punishments.

These waggons kept the middle of the street. At either side marched a row of guards of infamous appearance, wearing three-pronged hats like the soldiers of the Directory, stained, torn, filthy, muffled up in Invalids' uniforms and hearse-boys' trousers, half grey and half blue, almost in tatters, with red epaulets, yellow cross-belts, sheath-knives, muskets and clubs: a species of servant-soldiers. These sbirri seemed a compound of the abjectness of the beggar and the authority of the executioner. The one who appeared to be their chief had a horsewhip in his hand. All these details, blurred by the twilight, were becoming clearer and clearer in the growing light. At the head and the rear of the convoy, gendarmes marched on horseback, solemn, and with drawn swords.

A crowd, come from nobody knows where, and gathered in a twinkling, as is frequently the case in Paris, were pushing along the two sides of the highway and looking on. In the neighbouring lanes there were heard people shouting and calling each other, and the wooden shoes of the market gardeners who were running to see.

Cosette was terrified. She did not comprehend; her breath failed her; what she saw did not seem possible to her; at last she exclaimed:

"Father! what can there be in those waggons?"

Jean Valjean answered:

"Convicts."

"And where are they going?"

"To the galleys."

At this moment the cudgelling, multiplied by a hundred

hands, reached its climax; blows with the flat of the sword joined in; it was a fury of whips and clubs; the galley slaves crouched down, a hideous obedience was produced by the punishment, and all were silent with the look of chained wolves. Cosette trembled in every limb; she continued:

"Father, are they still men?"

"Sometimes," said the wretched man.

It was, in fact, the Chain which, setting out before day from Bicêtre, took the Mans road to avoid Fontainebleau, where the king then was. This detour made the terrible journey last three or four days longer; but to spare the royal person the sight of the punishment it may well be prolonged.

Jean Valjean returned home overwhelmed. Such encounters are shocks, and the memory which they leave resembles a convulsion.

It was at this period that they visited the Jondrette den.

The day after that visit, Jean Valjean appeared in the cottage in the morning with his ordinary calmness, but with a large wound on his left arm, very much inflamed and very venomous, which resembled a burn, and which he explained in some way or other. This wound confined him within doors more than a month with fever. He would see no physician. When Cosette urged it: "Call the dog-doctor," said he.

His happiness was so great, that the frightful discovery of the Thenardiens, made in the Jondrette den, and so unexpectedly, had in some sort glided over him. He had succeeded in escaping; his trace was lost, what mattered the rest! he thought of it only to grieve over those wretches. "They are now in prison, and can do no harm in future," thought he, "but what a pitiful family in distress!"

CHAPTER VIII

In the first fortnight in April, Jean Valjean went on a journey. This, we know, happened with him from time to time, at very long intervals. It was generally when money was needed for the household expenses that Jean Valjean made these little journeys.

One evening Cosette, after sunset, had sat down on a seat in the garden. The wind was freshening in the trees, Cosette was musing; a vague sadness was coming over her little by little, that invincible sadness which evening gives and which comes, perhaps, who knows? from the mystery of the tomb half opened at that hour.

Cosette rose, slowly made the round of the garden, walking

in the grass, which was wet with dew, and saying to herself through the kind of melancholy somnambulism in which she was enveloped: "One really needs wooden shoes for the garden at this hour. I shall catch cold."

She returned to the seat.

Just as she was sitting down, she noticed in the place she had left a stone of considerable size which evidently was not there the moment before.

Cosette reflected upon this stone, asking herself what it meant. Suddenly, the idea that this stone did not come upon the seat of itself, that somebody had put it here made her afraid. No doubt was possible; she did not touch it, fled without daring to look behind her, took refuge in the house, and immediately shut the glass-door of the stairs with shutter, bar and bolt. She made Toussaint go over the whole house from cellar to garret, shut herself up in her room, drew her bolts, looked under her bed, lay down, and slept badly. All night she saw the stone big as a mountain and full of caves.

At sunrise—the peculiarity of sunrise is to make us laugh at all our terrors of the night, and our laugh is always proportioned to the fear we have had—at sunrise Cosette, on waking, dressed herself, went down to the garden, ran to the bench, and felt a cold sweat. The stone was there.

But this was only for a moment. What is fright by night is curiosity by day.

"Pshaw!" said she, "now let us see."

She raised the stone, which was pretty large. There was something underneath which resembled a letter.

It was a white paper envelope. Cosette took out of the envelope what it contained, a few lines written in a rather pretty handwriting, thought Cosette, and very fine.

She looked for a name, there was none; a signature, there was none. To whom was it addressed? to her probably, since a hand had placed the packet upon her seat. From whom did it come? An irresistible fascination took possession of her, and she said to herself that she must know what there was in it.

This is what she read:

"Separated lovers deceive absence by a thousand chimerical things which still have their reality. They are prevented from seeing each other, they cannot write to each other; they find a multitude of mysterious means of correspondence. They commission the song of the birds, the perfume of flowers, the laughter of children, the light of the sun, the sighs of the wind, the beams of the stars, the whole creation. And why not? All the works of

God were made to serve love. Love is powerful enough to charge all nature with its messages.

"O Spring! thou art a letter which I write to her."

During the reading Cosette entered gradually into reverie. This manuscript, in which she found still more clearness than obscurity, had the effect upon her of a half-opened sanctuary. Each of these mysterious lines was resplendent to her eyes, and flooded her heart with a strange light. The education which she had received had always spoken to her of the soul and never of love, almost like one who should speak of the brand and not of the flame. These lines, fallen one by one upon the paper, were what might be called drops of soul. From whom could they come? Who could have written them?

Cosette did not hesitate for a moment. One single man.

He!

She fled, went back to the house and shut herself up in her room to read over the manuscript again, to learn it by heart, and to muse. When she had read it well, she kissed it, and put it in her bosom.

It was done. Cosette had fallen back into the profound seraphic love. The abyss of Eden had reopened.

All that day Cosette was in a sort of stupefaction. She could hardly think, her ideas were like a tangled skein in her brain. She could really conjecture nothing, she hoped while yet trembling—what? vague things. She dared to promise herself nothing, and she would refuse herself nothing. Pallors passed over her face and chills over her body. It seemed to her at moments that she was entering the chimerical; she said to herself: "Is it real?" then she felt of the beloved paper under her dress, she pressed it against her heart, she felt its corners upon her flesh, and if Jean Valjean had seen her at that moment, he would have shuddered before that luminous and unknown joy which flashed from her eyes. "Oh yes!" thought she, "it is indeed he! this comes from him for me!"

At dusk she went down to the garden. Toussaint was busy in her kitchen, which looked out upon the back yard.

All at once she had that indefinable impression which we feel, though we see nothing, when there is somebody standing behind us.

She turned her head and rose.

It was he.

He was bareheaded. He appeared pale and thin. She hardly discerned his black dress. The twilight dimmed his fine forehead, and covered his eyes with darkness. He had,

under a veil of incomparable sweetness, something of death and of night. His face was lighted by the light of a dying day, and by the thought of a departing soul.

It seemed as if he was yet a phantom, and was now no longer a man.

His hat was lying a few steps distant in the shrubbery.

Cosette, ready to faint, did not utter a cry. She drew back slowly, for she felt herself attracted forward. He did not stir. Through the sad and ineffable something which enraptured him she felt the look of his eyes, which she did not see.

Cosette, in retreating, encountered a tree, and leaned against it. But for this tree, she would have fallen.

Then she heard his voice, that voice which she had never really heard, hardly rising above the rustling of the leaves, and murmuring:

"Pardon me, I am here. My heart is bursting. I could not live as I was; I have come. Have you read what I placed there, on this seat? do you recognise me at all? do not be afraid of me. If you but knew! I adore you! Pardon me, I am talking to you, I do not know what I am saying to you, perhaps I annoy you; do I annoy you?"

"O mother!" said she.

And she sank down upon herself as if she were dying.

He caught her, she fell, he caught her in his arms, he grasped her tightly, unconscious of what he was doing. He supported her even while tottering himself. He felt as if his head were enveloped in smoke; flashes of light passed through his eyelids; his ideas vanished; it seemed to him that he was performing a religious act, and that he was committing a profanation. Moreover, he did not feel one passionate emotion for this ravishing woman, whose form he felt against his heart. He was lost in love.

She took his hand and laid it on her heart. He felt the paper there, and stammered:

"You love me, then?"

She answered in a voice so low that it was no more than a breath which could scarcely be heard:

"Hush! you know it!"

And she hid her blushing head in the bosom of the proud and intoxicated young man.

He fell upon the seat, she by his side. There were no more words. The stars were beginning to shine. How was it that their lips met? How is it that the bird sings, that the snow melts, that the rose opens, that May blooms, that the dawn whitens behind the black trees on the shivering summit of the hills?

Gradually they began to talk. When they had finished, when they had told each other everything, she laid her head upon his shoulder, and asked him:

"What is your name?"

"My name is Marius," said he. "And yours?"

"My name is Cosette."

CHAPTER IX

Since 1823, and while the Montfermeil chop-house was gradually foundering and being swallowed up, not in the abyss of a bankruptcy, but in the sink of petty debts, the Thenardier couple had had two more children; both male. This made five; two girls and three boys. It was a good many.

The Thenardiess had disembarrassed herself of the two last, while yet at an early age and quite small, with singular good fortune. A woman named Magnon had succeeded in getting her two children endowed by Monsieur Gillenormand. They died of croup, and nothing had been more easy than to substitute the two Thenardier brats in order that the payments should not cease. Magnon received eighty francs a month from M. Gillenormand's agent. She paid ten francs a month to the Thenardiers. Nothing could be more simple.

Suddenly, these two poor children, till then well cared for, even by their ill fortune, were abruptly thrown out into life, and compelled to begin it.

A numerous arrest of malefactor^s like that of the Jondrette garret, necessarily complicated with ulterior searches and seizures, is really a disaster for this hideous occult counter-society which lives beneath public society; an event like this involves every description of misfortune in that gloomy world. The catastrophe of the Thenardiers produced the catastrophe of Magnon.

One day Magnon was arrested and the whole household, which was suspicious, was included in the haul. The two little boys were playing at the time in a back yard, and saw nothing of the raid. When they wanted to go in, they found the door closed and the house empty. A cobbler, whose shop was opposite, called them and handed them a paper which "their mother" had left for them. On the paper there was an address: M. Barge, rent-agent, Rue du Roi de Sicile, No. 8. The man of the shop said to them: "You don't live here any more. Go there—it is near by—the first street to the left. Ask your way with this paper."

The children started, the elder leading the younger, and holding in his hand the paper which was to be their guide. He was cold and his benumbed little fingers had but an awkward grasp, and held the paper loosely. As they were turning out of the Rue Clocheperce, a gust of wind snatched it from him, and, as night was coming on, the child could not find it again.

They began to wander, as chance led them, in the streets. That was how they came upon little Gavroche.

Shivering cheerfully under his rags, he was standing, as if in ecstasy, before a wig-maker's shop in the neighbourhood of the Orme Saint Gervais. He was adorned with a woman's woollen shawl, picked up nobody knows where, of which he had made a muffler. Little Gavroche appeared to be intensely admiring a wax bride, with bare neck and a head-dress of orange flowers, which was revolving behind the sash, exhibiting, between two lamps, its smile to the passers; but in reality he was watching the shop to see if he could not "chipper" a cake of soap from the front, which he would afterwards sell for a sou to a hair-dresser in the *banlieue*. It often happened that he breakfasted upon one of these cakes. He called this kind of work, for which he had some talent, "shaving the barbers."

As he was contemplating the windows, and the Windsor soap, two children of unequal height, rather neatly dressed, and still smaller than he, one appearing to be seven years old, the other five, timidly turned the knob of the door and entered the shop, asking for something, charity, perhaps, in a plaintive manner which rather resembled a groan than a prayer. They both spoke at once, and their words were unintelligible because sobs choked the voice of the younger, and the cold made the elder's teeth chatter. The barber turned with a furious face, and without leaving his razor, crowding back the elder with his left hand and the little one with his knee, pushed them into the street and shut the door, saying:

"Coming and freezing people for nothing!"

The two children went on, crying. Meanwhile a cloud had come up; it began to rain.

Little Gavroche ran after them and accosted them:

"What is the matter with you, little brats?"

"We don't know where to sleep," answered the elder.

"Is that all?" said Gavroche. "That is nothing. Does anybody cry for that? Are they canaries then?"

And assuming, through his slightly bantering superiority, a tone of softened authority and gentle protection:

"*Momacques*, come with me."

"Yes, Monsieur," said the elder.

And the two children followed him as they would have followed an archbishop. They had stopped crying.

Gavroche led them up the Rue Saint Antoine in the direction of the Bastille.

As they were passing by one of those thick grated lattices which indicate a baker's shop, for bread, like gold, is kept behind iron gratings, Gavroche turned:

"Ah, ah, *mômes*, have we dined?"

"Monsieur," answered the elder, "we have not eaten since early this morning."

"You are, then, without father or mother?" resumed Gavroche, majestically.

"Excuse me, Monsieur, we have a papa and mamma, but we don't know where they are."

"Sometimes that's better than knowing," said Gavroche, who was a thinker; and he took a sou from one of his pockets.

Without giving the two little boys time for amazement, he pushed them both before him into the baker's shop, and laid his sou on the counter, crying:

"Boy! five centimes worth of bread."

When the bread was cut, the baker put the sou in his drawer, and Gavroche said to the two children:

"*Morfilez.*"

The little boys looked at him confounded.

Gavroche began to laugh.

"Ah! stop, that is true, they don't know yet, they are so small."

And he added:

"Eat."

At the same time he handed each of them a piece of bread.

And, thinking that the elder, who appeared to him more worthy of his conversation, deserved some special encouragement and ought to be relieved of all hesitation in regard to satisfying his appetite, he added, giving him the largest piece.

"Stick that in your gun."

There was one piece smaller than the other two; he took it for himself.

The poor children were starving, Gavroche included. While they were tearing the bread with their fine teeth, they reached the corner of that gloomy Rue des Ballets, at the end of which the low and forbidding wicket of La Force is seen.

"Hullo, is that you, Gavroche?" said somebody.

"Hullo, is that you, Montparnasse?" said Gavroche.

A man had just accosted the *gamin*, and this man was none other than Montparnasse, disguised with blue eye-glasses, but

recognisable by Gavroche. He was one of that gang, most of which had been arrested by Javert.

"Do you know where I am going?" inquired Montparnasse.

"To the Abbey of Monte à Regret," said Gavroche.

"Joker! I am going to find Babet."

"I thought he was buckled."

"He has slipped the buckle," answered Montparnasse.

And he rapidly related to the *gamin* that, on the morning of that very day, Babet, having been transferred to the Conciergerie, had escaped by turning to the left instead of turning to the right in "the vestibule of the Examination Hall."

Gavroche admired the skill.

"What a dentist!" said he.

"But you," resumed Montparnasse, "where are you going now?"

Gavroche showed his two protégés and said:

"I am going to put these children to bed."

"Where do they sleep?"

"At my house."

"Your house? Where is that?"

"At my house."

"You have a room, then?"

"Yes, I have a room."

"And where is your room?"

"In the elephant," said Gavroche. "On the supposition that you should need me some night, you will come and find me there. I live in the second storey. There is no porter. You would ask for Monsieur Gavroche."

"All right," said Montparnasse.

And they separated, Montparnasse making his way towards the Grève and Gavroche towards the Bastille.

Twenty years ago there was still to be seen, in the south-east corner of the Place de la Bastille, near the canal basin dug in the ancient ditch of the prison citadel, a grotesque monument which has now faded away from the memory of Parisians, and which is worthy to leave some trace, for it was an idea of the "Member of the Institute, General-in-Chief of the Army of Egypt."

We say monument, although it was only a rough model. But this rough model itself, a huge plan, a vast carcass of an idea of Napoleon, which two or three successive gusts of wind had carried away and thrown each time further from us, had become historical, and had acquired a definiteness which contrasted with its provisional aspect. It was an elephant, forty feet high, constructed of framework and masonry, bearing on its back its tower, which resembled a house, formerly painted

green by some house-painter, now painted black by the sun, the rain, and the weather. It was a mysterious and mighty phantom, visibly standing by the side of the invisible spectre of the Bastille.

As they came near the colossus, Gavroche comprehended the effect which the infinitely great may produce upon the infinitely small, and said:

"Brats! don't be frightened."

Then he entered through a gap in the fence into the enclosure of the elephant, and helped the *mômes* to crawl through the breach. The two children, a little frightened, followed Gavroche without saying a word, and trusted themselves to that little Providence in rags who had given them bread and promised them a lodging.

Lying by the side of the fence was a ladder, which by day was used by the working men of the neighbouring woodyard. Gavroche lifted it with singular vigour, and set it up against one of the elephant's fore-legs. About the point where the ladder ended, a sort of black hole could be distinguished in the belly of the colossus.

Gavroche showed the latter and the hole to his guests, and said to them:

"Mount and enter."

The two little fellows looked at each other in terror.

"You are afraid, *mômes*!" exclaimed Gavroche.

And he added:

"You shall see."

He clasped the elephant's wrinkled foot, and in a twinkling, without deigning to make use of the ladder, he reached the crevice. He entered it as an adder glides into a hole, and disappeared, and a moment afterwards the two children saw his pallid face dimly appearing, like a faded and wan form, at the edge of the hole full of darkness.

"Well," cried he, "why don't you come up, *momignards*? you'll see how nice it is! Come up," said he, to the elder. "I will give you a hand."

The little ones urged each other forward. The *gamin* made them afraid and reassured them at the same time, and then it rained very hard. The elder ventured. The younger, seeing his brother go up, and himself left all alone between the paws of the huge beast, had a great desire to cry, but he did not dare.

The elder clambered up the rounds of the ladder. He tottered badly. Gavroche, while he was on his way, encouraged him with the exclamations of a fencing master to his scholars, or of a muleteer to his mules:

"Don't be afraid!"

"That's it!"

"Come on!"

"Put your foot there!"

"Your hand here!"

"Be brave!"

And when he came within his reach, he caught him quickly and vigorously by the arm and drew him up.

"Gulped!" said he.

The *môme* had passed through the crevice.

"Now," said Gavroche, "wait for me, Monsieur, have the kindness to sit down."

And, going out by the crevice as he had entered, he let himself glide with the agility of a monkey along the elephant's leg; he dropped upon his feet in the grass, caught the little five-year-old by the waist, and set him half-way up the ladder, then he began to mount up behind him, crying to the elder:

"I will push him; you pull him."

In an instant the little fellow was lifted, pushed, dragged, pulled, stuffed, crammed into the hole without having had time to know what was going on. And Gavroche, entering after him, pushing back the ladder with a kick so that it fell upon the grass, began to clap his hands, and cried:

"Here we are: Hurrah for General Lafayette!"

This explosion over, he added:

"Brats, you are in my house."

Gavroche was in fact at home.

A sudden light made them wink; Gavroche had just lighted one of those bits of string soaked in resin which are called cellar-rats. The cellar-rat, which made more smoke than flame, rendered the inside of the elephant dimly visible.

Gavroche's bed was there. It was complete. That is to say, there was a mattress, a covering, and an alcove with curtains. The mattress was a straw mat, the covering a large blanket of coarse grey wool, very warm and almost new.

Small as they were, none of them could have stood up in the alcove. Gavroche still held the cellar-rat in his hand.

"Now," said he, "*pioncez!* I am going to suppress the candelabra." Then he turned towards the elder:

"Eh! we are pretty well off, here!"

"Oh, yes," answered the eldest, looking at Gavroche with the expression of a rescued angel.

"Listen to me," continued Gavroche; "you must never whine any more for anything. I will take care of you. You will see what fun we have. In summer we will go to the Glacière with Navet, a comrade of mine, we will go swimming in the

Basin. And then we will go to see the guillotining. I will show you the executioner. He lives in the Rue des Marais. Monsieur Sanson. There is a letter-box on his door. Oh! we have famous fun!"

The two children hugged close to each other. Gavroche finished arranging them upon the mat, and pulled the coverlid up to their ears, then repeated for the third time the injunction in hieratic language:

"*Pioncez!*"

And he blew out the taper. In a few minutes the three *mômes*, plunged in slumber, heard nothing more.

The hours of the night passed away. Towards the end of the hour which immediately precedes daybreak, a man turned out of the Rue Sainte Antoine, running, crossed the Square, turned the great enclosure of the Column of July, and glided between the palisades under the belly of the elephant. When under the elephant he raised a grotesque call, which belongs to no human language, and which a parrot alone could reproduce. He twice repeated this call, of which the following orthography gives but a very imperfect idea:

"Kirikikiou!"

At the second call, a clear, cheerful young voice answered from the belly of the elephant:

"Yes!"

Almost immediately the board which closed the hole moved away, and gave passage to a child, who descended along the elephant's leg and dropped lightly near the man. It was Gavroche. The man was Montparnasse.

The man and the child recognised each other silently in the dark; Montparnasse merely said: "we need you. Come and give us a lift."

The *gamin* did not ask any other explanation.

"I'm on hand," said he.

CHAPTER X

What had taken place that same night at La Force was this:

An escape had been concerted between Babet, Brujon, Gueulemer and Thenardier, although Thenardier was in solitary. Babet had done the business for himself during the day, as we have seen from the account of Montparnasse to Gavroche. Montparnasse was to help them from without.

Brujon, having spent a month in a chamber of punishment,

had had time, first, to twist a rope, secondly, to perfect a plan. Formerly these stern cells in which the discipline of the prison delivers the condemned to himself were composed of four stone walls, a ceiling of stone, a pavement of tiles, a camp bed, a grated air-hole, a double iron door, and were called "dungeons"; but the dungeon had been thought too horrible; now it is composed of an iron door, a grated air-hole, a camp bed, a pavement of tiles, a ceiling of stone, four stone walls, and it is called "chamber of punishment". There is a little light in them about noon. The inconvenience of these chambers, which, as we see, are not dungeons, is that they allow beings to reflect who should be made to work.

Brujon, then, had reflected, and he had gone out of the chamber of punishment with a rope. As he was reputed very dangerous in the Charlemagne Court, he was put into the Bâtiment Neuf. The first thing which he found in the Bâtiment Neuf was Gueulemer, the second was a nail; Gueulemer, that is to say crime, a nail, that is to say liberty.

Brujon, of whom it is time to give a complete idea, was, with an appearance of a delicate complexion and a profoundly premeditated languor, a polished, gallant, intelligent robber, with an enticing look and an atrocious smile. His look was a result of his will, and his smile of his nature. His first studies in his art were directed towards roofs; he had made a great improvement in the business of the lead strippers who despoil roofings and distraint eaves by the process called: "the double fat."

What rendered the moment peculiarly favourable for an attempt at escape, was that some workmen were taking off and relaying, at that very time, a part of the slating of the prison. A large chimney, probably of some ancient kitchen of the Dukes de La Force, started from the ground floor, passed through the four stories, cutting in two all the dormitories, in which it appeared to be a kind of flattened pillar, and went out through the roof.

Gueulemer and Brujon were in the same dormitory. They had been put into the lower storey by precaution. It happened that the heads of their beds rested against the flue of the chimney.

Thenardier was exactly above them in the attic known as the Bel Air. He had been in solitary since the night of the 3rd of February. Nobody has ever discovered how, or by what contrivance, he had succeeded in procuring and hiding a bottle of that wine invented, it is said, by Desrués, with which a narcotic is mixed, and which the band of the "Endormeurs" has rendered celebrated.

There are in many prisons treacherous employees, half jailers and half thieves, who aid in escapes, who sell a faithless service to the police, and who make much more than their salary.

On this same night, then, on which little Gavroche had picked up the two wandering children, Brujon and Gueulemer, knowing that Babet, who had escaped that very morning, was waiting for them in the street as well as Montparnasse, got up softly and began to pierce the flue of the chimney which touched their beds, with a nail which Brujon had found. The fragments fell upon Brujon's bed, so that nobody heard them. The hailstorm and the thunder shook the doors upon their hinges, and made a frightful and convenient uproar in the prison. Those of the prisoners who awoke made a feint of going to sleep again, and let Gueulemer and Brujon alone. Brujon was adroit. Gueulemer was vigorous. Before any sound had reached the watchman who was lying in the grated cell with a window opening into the sleeping-room, the wall was pierced, the chimney scaled, the iron trellis which closed the upper orifice of the flue forced, and the two formidable bandits were upon the roof. The rain and the wind redoubled, the roof was slippery.

A gulf of six feet wide and eighty feet deep separated them from the encircling wall. At the bottom of this gulf they saw a sentinel's musket gleaming in the obscurity. They fastened one end of the rope which Brujon had woven in his cell, to the stumps of the bars of the chimney which they had just twisted off, threw the other end over the encircling wall, cleared the gulf at a bound, clung to the coping of the wall, bestrode it, let themselves glide one after the other down along the rope upon a little roof which adjoined the bath-house, pulled down their rope, leaped into the bath-house yard, crossed it, pushed open the porter's slide, near which hung the cord, pulled the cord, opened the *porte-cochère*, and were in the street.

A few moments afterwards they had rejoined Babet and Montparnasse, who were prowling about the neighbourhood.

In drawing down their rope they had broken it, and there was a piece remaining fastened to the chimney on the roof. They had received no other damage than having pretty thoroughly skinned their hands.

That night Thenardier had received a warning, it never could be ascertained in what manner, and did not go to sleep.

About one o'clock in the morning, the night being very dark, he saw two shadows passing on the roof, in the rain and in the raging wind, before the window opposite his cage.

One stopped at the window long enough for a look. It was Brujon. Thenardier recognised him, and understood. That was enough for him. Thenardier, described as an assassin, and detained under the charge of lying in wait by night with force and arms, was kept constantly in sight. A sentinel, who was relieved every two hours, marched with loaded gun before his cage. The Bel Air was lighted by a reflector. The prisoner had irons on his feet weighing fifty pounds. Every day, at four o'clock in the afternoon, a warden, escorted by two dogs—this was customary at that period—entered his cage, laid down near his bed a two-pound loaf of black bread, a jug of water, and a dish full of very thin soup, in which a few beans were swimming, examined his irons, and struck upon the bars. This man, with his dogs, returned twice in the night.

Thenardier had obtained permission to keep a kind of an iron spike which he used to nail his bread into a crack in the wall, "in order," said he, "to preserve it from the rats." As Thenardier was constantly in sight, they imagined no danger from this spike. However, it was remembered afterwards that a warden had said: "It would be better to let him have nothing but a wooden spike."

At two o'clock in the morning the sentinel, who was an old soldier, was relieved, and his place was taken by a conscript. A few moments afterwards the man with the dogs made his visit, and went away without noticing anything except the extreme youth and the "peasant air" of the "greenhorn". Two hours afterwards, at four o'clock, when they came to relieve the conscript, they found him asleep and lying on the ground like a log near Thenardier's cage. As to Thenardier, he was not there. His broken irons were on the floor. There was a hole in the ceiling of his cage, and above another hole in the roof. A board had been torn from his bed, and doubtless carried away, for it was not found again. There was also seized in the cell a half-empty bottle containing the rest of the drugged wine with which the soldier had been put to sleep. The soldier's bayonet had disappeared.

At the moment of this discovery it was supposed that Thenardier was out of all reach. The reality is that he was no longer in the Bâtiment Neuf, but that he was still in great danger.

Thenardier, on reaching the roof of the Bâtiment Neuf, found the remnant of Brujon's cord hanging to the bars of the upper trap of the chimney, but this broken end being much too short, he was unable to escape over the sentry's path as Brujon and Gueulemer had done.

One cannot always comprehend the marvels of escape. The man who escapes is inspired; there is something of the star

and the lightning in the mysterious gleam of flight. However this may be, dripping with sweat, soaked through by the rain, his clothes in strips, his hands skinned, his elbows bleeding, his knees torn, Thenardier had reached the edge of the wall, he had stretched himself on it at full length, and there his strength failed him. A steep escarpment, three storeys high, separated him from the pavement of the street.

The rope which he had was too short.

He was waiting there, pale, exhausted, having lost all the hope which he had had, still covered by night, but saying to himself that day was just about to dawn. The clock struck four. Thenardier shuddered. A few moments afterwards that wild and confused noise which follows upon the discovery of an escape broke out in the prison. The sound of doors opening and shutting, the grinding of gratings upon their hinges, the tumult in the guard-house, the harsh calls of the gatekeepers, the sound of the butts of muskets upon the pavement of the yards reached him. Lights moved up and down in the grated windows of the dormitories, a torch ran along the attic of the Bâtiment Neuf—the firemen of the barracks alongside had been called. Their caps, which the torches lighted up in the rain, were going to and fro along the roofs. At the same time Thenardier saw in the direction of the Bastille a whitish cloud throwing a dismal pallor over the lower part of the sky.

He was on the top of a wall ten inches wide, stretched out beneath the storm, with two precipices, at the right and at the left, unable to stir, giddy at the prospect of falling and horror-stricken at the certainty of arrest, and his thoughts, like the pendulum of a clock, went from one of these ideas to the other: "Dead if I fall, taken if I stay."

In this anguish he suddenly saw—the street being still wrapped in obscurity—a man who was gliding along the walls, and who came from the direction of the Rue Pavée stop in the recess above which Thenardier was as it were suspended. This man was joined by a second, who was walking with the same precaution, then by a third, then by a fourth. When these men were together, one of them lifted the latch of the gate in the fence, and they all four entered the enclosure of the shanty. They were exactly under Thenardier. These men had evidently selected this recess so as to be able to talk without being seen by the passers or by the sentinel who guards the gate of La Force a few steps off. It must also be stated that the rain kept this sentinel blockaded in his sentry-box. Thenardier dared not call them, a cry overheard might destroy all; he had an idea, a final one, a flash of light; he took from his pocket the end of Brujon's rope, which he had detached from

the chimney of the Bâtiment Neuf, and threw it into the enclosure.

This rope fell at their feet.

"A rope," said Babet.

"There is the innkeeper," said Montparnasse.

They raised their eyes. Thenardier ventured to speak:

"I am benumbed."

"Let yourself slip down, we will catch you."

"My hands are stiff."

"Only tie the rope to the wall."

"I can't."

"One of us must get up," said Montparnasse.

"Three storeys!" said Brujon.

"Where can we find a brat?" said Gueulemer.

"Wait," said Montparnasse. "I have the thing."

He opened the gate of the fence softly, made sure that nobody was passing in the street, went out carefully, shut the door after him, and started on a run in the direction of the Bastille.

Seven or eight minutes elapsed, eight thousand centuries to Thenardier; Babet, Brujon and Gueulemer kept their teeth clenched; the door at last opened again, and Montparnasse appeared, out of breath, with Gavroche. The rain still kept the street entirely empty.

Little Gavroche entered the enclosure and looked upon these bandit forms with a quiet air. The water was dripping from his hair. Gueulemer addressed him:

"Brat, are you a man?"

The *gamin* examined the rope, the flue, the wall, the windows, and made that inexpressible and disdainful sound with the lips which signifies:

"What's that?"

"There is a man up there whom you will save," replied Montparnasse.

"Will you?" added Brujon.

"Goosy!" answered the child, as if the question appeared to him absurd; and he took off his shoes.

Gueulemer caught up Gavroche with one hand, put him on the roof of the shanty, the worm-eaten boards of which bent beneath the child's weight, and handed him the rope which Brujon had tied together during the absence of Montparnasse. The *gamin* went towards the flue, which it was easy to enter, thanks to a large hole at the roof. Just as he was about to start, Thenardier, who saw safety and life approaching, bent over the edge of the wall; the first gleam of day lighted up his forehead reeking with sweat, his livid cheeks, his thin and savage

nose, his grey bristly beard, and Gavroche recognised him: "Hold on!" said he, "it is my father!—Well, that don't hinder!"

And taking the rope in his teeth, he resolutely commenced the ascent.

He reached the top of the ruin, bestrode the old wall like a horse, and tied the rope firmly to the upper crossbar of the window.

A moment afterwards Thenardier was in the street.

As soon as he had touched the pavement, as soon as he felt himself out of danger, he was no longer either fatigued, benumbed, or trembling; the terrible things through which he had passed vanished like a whiff of smoke, all that strange and ferocious intellect awoke, and found itself erect and free, ready to march forward. The man's first words were these:

"Now, who are we going to eat?"

"Let us hide first," said Brujon. "Finish in three words, and we will separate immediately. There was an affair which had a good look in the Rue Plumet, a deserted street, an isolated house, an old rusty grating upon a garden, some lone women."

"Well, why not?" inquired Thenardier.

"Your *fée** Eponine has been to see the thing," answered Babet.

"And she brought a biscuit to Magnon," added Gueulemer; "nothing to *maquiller* there."†

"The *fée* isn't *loffe*,"‡ said Thenardier. "Still we must see."

"Yes, yes," said Brujon, "we must see."

Meantime none of these men appeared longer to see Gavroche, who, during this colloquy, had seated himself upon one of the stone supports of the fence; he waited a few minutes, perhaps for his father to turn towards him, then he put on his shoes, and said:

"It is over? you have no more use for me? men! you are out of your trouble. I am going. I must go and get my *mômes* up."

And he went away.

The five men went out of the enclosure one after another.

When Gavroche had disappeared at the turn of the Rue des Ballets, Babet took Thenardier aside.

"Did you notice that *mion*?" he asked him.

* Your daughter. † Nothing to do there. ‡ Stupid.

"What *mion*?"

"The *mion* who climbed up the wall and brought you the rope."

"Not much."

"Well, I don't know, but it seems to me that it is your son."

"Pshaw!" said Thenardier, "do you think so?"

CHAPTER XI

The next day, it was the 3rd of June, 1832, a date which must be noted on account of the grave events which were at that time suspended over the horizon of Paris like thunder-clouds. Marius at nightfall was following the same path, with the same rapturous thoughts in his heart, when he perceived, under the trees of the boulevard, Eponine approaching him. He turned hastily, left the boulevard, changed his route, and went to the Rue Plumet through the Rue Monsieur.

This caused Eponine to follow him to the Rue Plumet. She saw him push aside the bar of the grating, and glide into the garden.

"Why," said she, "he is going into the house."

She approached the grating, felt of the bars one after another, and easily recognised the one which Marius had displaced.

She murmured in an undertone, with a mournful accent:

"None of that, Lisette!"

She sat down upon the surbase of the grating, close beside the bar, as if she were guarding it. It was just at the point at which the grating joined the neighbouring wall. There was an obscure corner there, in which Eponine was entirely hidden.

She remained thus for more than an hour, without stirring and without breathing, a prey to her own thoughts.

About ten o'clock in the evening, six men, who were walking separately and at some distance from each other along the wall, and who might have been taken for a tipsy patrol, entered the Rue Plumet.

The first to arrive at the grating of the garden stopped and waited for the others; in a second he began to examine the grating as Eponine had done an hour before, grasping each bar successively and shaking it carefully. In this way he came to a bar which was loosened. Just as he was about to lay hold of this bar, a hand, starting abruptly from the shadow, fell upon his arm, he felt himself pushed sharply back by the middle of his breast, and a roughened voice said to him without crying out:

"There is a *cab*."

At the same time he saw a pale girl standing before him.

The man felt that commotion which is always given by the unexpected. He bristled up hideously; nothing is so frightful to see as ferocious beasts which are startled, their appearance when terrified is terrifying. He recoiled and stammered:

"What is this creature?"

"Your daughter."

It was indeed Eponine who was speaking to Thenardier.

On the appearance of Eponine the five others, that is to say, Claquesous, Gueulemer, Babet, Montparnasse and Brujon, approached without a sound, without haste, without saying a word, with the ominous slowness peculiar to these men of the night.

In their hands might be distinguished some strangely hideous tools. Gueulemer had one of those crooked crowbars which the prowlers call *fanchons*.

"Ah there, what are you doing here? what do you want of us? are you crazy?" exclaimed Thenardier, as much as one can exclaim in a whisper. "What do you come and hinder us in our work for?"

Eponine began to laugh and sprang to his neck.

"I am here, my darling father, because I am here. Is there any law against sitting upon the stones in these days? It is you who shouldn't be here. There is nothing to do here. But embrace me now, my dear good father! What a long time since I have seen you! You are out then?"

Thenardier tried to free himself from Eponine's arms, and muttered:

"Very well. You have embraced me. Yes, I am out. I am not in. Now, be off."

But Eponine did not loose her hold and redoubled her caresses.

"My darling father, how did you do it? You must have a good deal of wit to get out of that! Tell me about it. And my mother? Where is my mother? Give me some news of mamma."

Thenardier answered:

"She is well; I don't know; let me alone; I tell you to be off."

"I don't want to go away just now," said Eponine, with the pettishness of a spoiled child; "you send me away when here it is four months that I haven't seen you, and when I have hardly had time to embrace you."

And she caught her father again by the neck.

"Ah! come now, this is foolish," said Babet.

Eponine turned towards the five bandits.

"Why, this is Monsieur Brujon. Good-day, Monsieur Babet. Good-day, Monsieur Claquesous. Don't you remember me, Monsieur Gueulemer? How goes it, Montparnasse?"

"Yes, they recognise you," said Thenardier. "But good-day, good-night, keep off, don't disturb us!"

She pressed in her little hand, as bony and weak as the hand of a corpse, the great rough fingers of Gueulemer, and continued:

"You know very well that I am not a fool. Ordinarily you believe me. I have done you service on occasion. Well, I have learned all about this; you would expose yourselves uselessly, do you see. I swear to you that there is nothing to be done in that house."

"There are lone women," said Gueulemer.

"No. The people have moved away."

"The candles have not, anyhow!" said Babet.

And he showed Eponine, through the tops of the trees, a light which was moving about in the garret of the cottage. It was Toussaint, who had sat up to hang out her clothes to dry.

Eponine made a final effort.

"Well," said she, "they are very poor people and it is a shanty where there isn't a sou."

"Go to the devil!" cried Thenardier. "When we have turned the house over, and when we have put the cellar at the top and the garret at the bottom, we will tell you what there is inside, and whether it is *balles*, *ronds* or *broques*."

She placed her back against the grating, faced the six bandits who were armed to the teeth, and to whom the night gave faces of demons, and said in a low and firm voice:

"Well, I—I won't have it."

They stopped astounded. She resumed:

"Friends! listen to me. That isn't the thing. Now I speak. In the first place, if you go into the garden, if you touch this grating, I shall cry out, I shall rap on doors, I shall wake everybody up, I shall have all six of you arrested, I shall call the *sergents de ville*."

"She would do it," said Thenardier in a low tone to Brujon.

Then she went on, casting her ghastly bloodshot eyes over the bandits:

"What is it to me whether somebody picks me up to-morrow on the pavement of the Rue Plumet, beaten to death with a club by my father, or whether they find me in a year

in the ditches of Saint Cloud, or at the Ile de Cygnes, among the old rotten rubbish and the dead dogs?"

She was obliged to stop; a dry cough seized her, her breath came like a rattle from her narrow and feeble chest.

She resumed:

"I have but to cry out, they come, bang! You are six; but I am everybody."

The six assassins, sullen and abashed at being held in check by a girl, went under the protecting shade of the lantern and held counsel, with humiliated and furious shrugs of their shoulders.

She watched them the while with a quiet yet indomitable air.

"Something is the matter with her," said Babet. "Some reason. Is she in love with the *cab*? But it is a pity to lose it. Two women, an old fellow who lodges in a backyard, there are pretty good curtains at the windows. The old fellow must be a *guinal*.* I think it is a good thing."

"Well, go in the rest of you," exclaimed Montparnasse. "Do the thing. I will stay here with the girl, and if she trips——"

He made the open knife which he had in his hand gleam in the light of the lantern.

Thenardier said not a word and seemed ready for anything.

Brujon, who was something of an oracle, appeared thoughtful. He had a reputation for recoiling from nothing, and they knew that he had plundered, from sheer bravado, a police station. Moreover he made verses and songs which gave him a great authority.

Babet questioned him.

"You don't say anything, Brujon?"

Brujon remained silent a minute longer, then he shook his head in several different ways, and at last decided to speak.

"Here: I met two sparrows fighting this morning; to-night, I run against a woman quarrelling. All this is bad. Let us go away."

They went away.

Eponine, who had not taken her eyes off from them, saw them turn back the way they had come. She rose and began to creep along the walls and houses behind them. She followed them as far as the boulevard. There they separated, and she saw these men sink away into the obscurity into which they seemed to melt.

While this species of dog in human form was mounting

* A Jew.

guard over the grating, and the six bandits were slinking away before a girl, Marius was with Cosette.

Never had Marius been more enamoured, more happy, more in ecstasy. But he had found Cosette sad. Cosette had been weeping. Her eyes were red.

It was the first cloud in this wonderful dream.

Marius's first word was:

"What is the matter?"

And she answered:

"This morning my father told me to arrange all my little affairs and to be ready, that he would give me his clothes to pack, that he was obliged to take a journey, that we were going away, that we must have a large trunk for me and a small one for him, to get all that ready within a week from now, and that we should go, perhaps, to England."

He asked in a feeble voice:

"To England. Shall you go?"

"What would you have me do?" said she, clasping her hands.

"So, you will go?"

"If my father goes."

"So, you will go?"

Cosette took Marius's hand and pressed it without answering.

"Very well," said Marius. "Then I shall go elsewhere."

Cosette felt the meaning of this word still more than she understood it. She turned so pale that her face became white in the darkness. She stammered:

"What do you mean?"

Marius looked at her, then slowly raised his eyes towards heaven and answered:

"Nothing."

When his eyes were lowered, he saw Cosette smiling upon him. The smile of the woman whom we love has a brilliancy which we can see by night.

"How stupid we are! Marius, I have an idea."

"What?"

"Go if we go! I will tell you where! Come and join me where I am!"

Marius was now a man entirely awakened. He had fallen back into reality. He cried to Cosette:

"Go with you? are you mad? But it takes money, and I have none! Go to England? Why, I have not the means to pay for a passport!"

He caught her hand.

"Cosette, I have never given my word of honour to any-

body, because I stand in awe of my word of honour. I feel that my father is at my side. Now, I give you my most sacred word of honour that, if you go away, I shall die."

There was in the tone with which he pronounced these words a melancholy so solemn and so quiet, that Cosette trembled. She felt that chill which is given by a stern and true fact passing over us. From the shock she ceased weeping.

"No, listen," said he; "do not expect me to-morrow."

"Why not?"

"Do not expect me till the day after to-morrow."

She took his head in both her hands, rising on tiptoe to reach his height, and striving to see his hope in his eyes.

Marius continued:

"It occurs to me, you must know my address, something may happen, we don't know; I live with that friend named Courfeyrac: Rue de la Verrerie, No. 16."

He put his hand in his pocket, took out a penknife, and wrote with the blade upon the plastering of the wall:

"16, Rue de la Verrerie."

They fell into each other's arms, without perceiving that their lips were joined, while their uplifted eyes, overflowing with ecstasy and full of tears, were fixed upon the stars.

CHAPTER XII

Grandfather Gillenormand had, at this period, fully completed his ninety-first year. He still lived with Mademoiselle Gillenormand, Rue des Filles du Calvaire, No. 6, in that old house which belonged to him. One evening, it was the 4th of June, which did not prevent Monsieur Gillenormand from having a blazing fire in his fireplace, he had said good-night to his daughter, who was sewing in the adjoining room. He thought of Marius lovingly and bitterly; and, as usual, the bitterness predominated. An increase of tenderness always ended by boiling over and turning into indignation.

In the deepest of this reverie, his old domestic, Basque, came in and asked:

"Can Monsieur receive Monsieur Marius?"

The old man straightened up, pallid and like a corpse which rises under a galvanic shock. All his blood had flown back to his heart. He stammered out in a whisper:

"Show him in."

And he remained in the same attitude, his head shaking, his eyes fixed on the door. It opened. A young man entered. It was Marius.

"Monsieur," said Marius, "I know that my presence is displeasing to you, but I come only to ask one thing of you, and then I will go away immediately."

"You are a fool!" said the old man. "Who tells you to go away? You have come to ask something of me, say you? Well, what? what is it? speak!"

"Monsieur," said Marius, with the look of a man who feels that he is about to fall into an abyss, "I come to ask your permission to marry."

M. Gillenormand staggered.

"You marry! at twenty-one! You have arranged that! You have nothing but a permission to ask! a formality. Sit down, Monsieur. So you want to marry? Whom? Can the question be asked without indiscretion?"

He stopped, and before Marius had had time to answer, he added violently:

"Come, now, you have a business? your fortune made? how much do you earn at your lawyer's trade?"

"Nothing," said Marius, with a firmness and resolution which were almost savage.

"Nothing? you have nothing to live on but the twelve hundred livres which I send you?"

Marius made no answer. M. Gillenormand continued:

"Then I understand the girl is rich?"

"As I am."

"What! no dowry?"

"No."

"Some expectations?"

"I believe not."

"With nothing to her back! and what is the father?"

"I do not know."

"What is her name?"

"Mademoiselle Fauchelevent."

"Pttt!" said the old man.

"Monsieur!" exclaimed Marius.

M. Gillenormand interrupted him with the tone of a man who is talking to himself.

"That is it, twenty-one, no business, twelve hundred livres a year. Madame the Baroness Pontmercy will go to market to buy two sous' worth of parsley."

"Monsieur," said Marius, in the desperation of the last vanishing hope, "I supplicate you! I love her. You don't realise it; the first time that I saw her was at the Luxembourg, she came there; in the beginning I did not pay much attention to her, and then I do not know how it came about, I fell in love with her. Oh! how wretched it has made me! Now,

at last, I see her every day, at her own house; her father does not know it. Only think that they are going away. We see each other in the garden in the evening; her father wants to take her to England. Then I said to myself: I will go and see my grandfather and tell him about it. I should go crazy in the first place, I should die, I should make myself sick, I should throw myself into the river. I must marry her because I should go crazy. Now, that is the whole truth, I do not believe that I have forgotten anything. She lives in a garden where there is a railing, in the Rue Plumet. It is near the Invalides."

Grandfather Gillenormand, radiant with joy, had sat down by Marius's side. While listening to him and enjoying the sound of his voice, he enjoyed at the same time a long pinch of snuff. At that word, Rue Plumet, he checked his inspiration and let the rest of his snuff fall on his knees.

"Rue Plumet! you say Rue Plumet?—Let us see now!—Are there not some barracks down there? Why, yes, that is it. Marius! I think it is very well for a young man like you to be in love. It belongs to your age. I like you better in love than as a Jacobin. As to the little girl, she receives you unknown to papa. That is all right. I have had adventures like that myself. More than one. Do you know how we do? we don't take the thing ferociously; we don't rush into the tragic; we don't conclude with marriage and with Monsieur the Mayor and his scarf. We are altogether a shrewd fellow. We have good sense. Slip over it, mortals, don't marry. We come and find grandfather, who is a good man at heart, and who almost always has a few rolls of louis in an old drawer; we say to him: 'Grandfather, that's how it is.' And grandfather says: 'That is all natural. Youth must fare and old age must wear. I have been young, you will be old. Go on, my boy, you will repay this to your grandson. There are two hundred pistoles. Amuse yourself, roundly! Nothing better! that is the way the thing should be done. We don't marry, but that doesn't hinder. You understand me?'"

Marius, petrified and unable to articulate a word, shook his head.

The Goodman burst into a laugh, winked his old eye, gave him a tap on the knee, looked straight into his eyes with a significant and sparkling expression, and said to him with the most amorous shrug of the shoulders:

"Stupid! make her your mistress."

Marius turned pale. He had understood nothing of all that his grandfather had been saying. But this wandering had

terminated in a word which Marius did understand, and which was a deadly insult to Cosette. That phrase, "make her your mistress," entered the heart of the chaste young man like a sword.

He rose, picked up his hat which was on the floor, and walked towards the door with a firm and assured step. There he turned, bowed profoundly before his grandfather, raised his head again, and said:

"Five years ago you outraged my father; to-day you have outraged my wife. I ask nothing more of you, Monsieur. Adieu."

Grandfather Gillenormand, astounded, opened his mouth, stretched out his arms, attempted to rise, but before he could utter a word, the door closed and Marius had disappeared.

The old man was for a few moments motionless, and as it were thunder-stricken, unable to speak or breathe, as if a hand were clutching his throat. At last he tore himself from his chair, ran to the door as fast as a man who is ninety-one can run, opened it and cried:

"Help! help!"

His daughter appeared, then the servants. He continued, with a pitiful rattle in his voice:

"Run after him! catch him! what have I done to him! he is mad! he is going away! Oh, my God! oh, my God!—this time he will not come back!"

But Marius was already out of hearing, and was at that very moment turning the corner of the Rue Saint Louis.

At nightfall, at precisely nine o'clock, as he had promised Cosette, he was in the Rue Plumet. When he approached the grating he forgot everything else. It was forty-eight hours since he had seen Cosette, he was going to see her again, every other thought faded away, and he felt now only a deep and wonderful joy. Those minutes in which we live centuries always have this sovereign and wonderful peculiarity, that for the moment while they are passing, they entirely fill the heart.

Marius displaced the grating, and sprang into the garden. Cosette was not at the place where she usually waited for him. He crossed the thicket and went to the recess near the steps. Then he returned to the house and, mad with love, intoxicated, dismayed, exasperated with grief and anxiety, like a master who returns home in an untoward hour, he rapped on the shutters. He rapped, he rapped again, at the risk of seeing the window open and the forbidding face of the father appear and ask him: "What do you want?" This was nothing compared with what he now began to see. When he had rapped, he raised his voice and called Cosette. "Cosette!"

cried he. "Cosette!" repeated he imperiously. There was no answer. It was settled. Nobody in the garden; nobody in the house.

Suddenly he heard a voice which appeared to come from the street, and which cried through the trees:

"Monsieur Marius!"

He arose.

"Monsieur Marius," added the voice, "your friends are expecting you at the barricade, in the Rue de la Chanvrerie."

This voice was not entirely unknown to him. It resembled the harsh and roughened voice of Eponine. Marius ran to the grating, pushed aside the movable bar, passed his head through, and saw somebody, who appeared to him to be a young man, rapidly disappearing in the twilight.

CHAPTER XIII

In the spring of 1832, although for three months the cholera had chilled all hearts and thrown over their agitation an expressibly mournful calm, Paris had for a long time been ready for a commotion. The great city resembles a piece of artillery; when it is loaded the falling of a spark is enough, the shot goes off. In June, 1832, the spark was the death of General Lamarque.

Lamarque was a man of renown and of action. His death, which had been looked for, was dreaded by the people as a loss, and by the Government as an opportunity. This death was a mourning. Like everything which is bitter, mourning may turn into revolt. This is what happened.

On the 5th of June, then, a day of mingled rain and sunshine, the procession of General Lamarque passed through Paris with the official military pomp, somewhat increased by way of precaution. Two battalions, drums muffled, muskets reversed, ten thousand National Guards, their sabres at their sides, the batteries of artillery of the National Guard, escorted the coffin. An armed multitude was passing by, a terrified multitude was looking on.

The Government also was observing. It was observing, with its hand upon the hilt of the sword. The municipal cavalry was in motion, and had just barred the bridge; on the right bank the dragoons left the Célestins and deployed along the Quai Morland. The men who were drawing Lafayette suddenly perceived them at the corner of the Quai, and cried: "The dragoons!" The dragoons were advancing at a walk, in silence, their pistols in their holsters, their sabres

in their sheaths, their musketoons in their rests, with an air of gloomy expectation.

At two hundred paces from the little bridge they halted. The *fiacre* in which Lafayette was, made its way up to them; they opened their ranks, let it pass, and closed again behind it. At that moment the dragoons and the multitude came together. The women fled in terror.

What took place in that fatal moment? nobody could tell. It was the dark moment when two clouds mingle. Some say that a trumpet flourish sounding the charge was heard from the direction of the Arsenal, others that a dagger-thrust was given by a child to a dragoon. The fact is that three shots were suddenly fired, the first killed the chief of the squadron, Cholet, the second killed an old deaf woman who was closing her window in the Rue Contrescarpe, the third singed the epaulet of an officer; a woman cried: "They are beginning too soon!" and all at once there was seen, from the side opposite the Quai Morland, a squadron of dragoons which had remained in barracks turning out on the gallop, with swords drawn, from the Rue Bassompierre and the Boulevard Bourdon, and sweeping all before them.

There are no more words, the tempest breaks loose, stones fall like hail, musketry burst forth, many rush headlong down the bank and across the little arm of the Seine, now filled up; the yards of the Ile Louvres, that vast ready-made citadel, bristle with combatants, they tear up stakes, they fire pistol-shots, a barricade is planned out; the young men, crowded back, pass the Bridge of Austerlitz with the hearse at a run, and charge on the Municipal Guard, the carbineers rush up, the dragoons ply the sabre, the mass scatters in every direction; a rumour of war flies to the four corners of Paris; men cry: "To arms!" they run, they tumble, they fly, they resist. Wrath sweeps along the *émeute* as the wind sweeps along a fire.

In less than an hour twenty-seven barricades rose from the ground in the single quartier of the markets. Anxiety was everywhere, and a certain tremor, little known to Paris.

At this time a ragged child who was coming down the Rue Ménilmontant, holding in his hand a branch of laburnum in bloom, which he had just gathered on the heights of Belleville, caught sight, before a second-hand dealer's shop, of an old horse-pistol. He threw his flowering branch upon the pavement, and cried:

"Mother What's-your-name, I'll borrow your machine."

And he ran off with the pistol and bent his steps towards the Orme Saint Gervais. There he effected his junction with a band led by Enjolras, Courfeyrac, Combeferre and Feuilly

as they were entering the Rue de la Chanvrerie. Gavroche—for it was he—approached them calmly:

"Where are we going?"

"Come on," said Courfeyrac.

The Rue de la Chanvrerie was hardly as long as the range of a carbine. Bossuet, who was ahead, improvised a speaking trumpet with his two hands, and shouted:

"Courfeyrac! Courfeyrac! ahoy!"

Courfeyrac heard the call, perceived Bossuet, and came a few steps, crying a "What do you want?" which was met on the way by a "Where are you going?"

"To make a barricade," answered Courfeyrac.

"Well, here! this is a good place! make it here!"

"That is true, Eagle," said Courfeyrac.

And at a sign from Courfeyrac, the band rushed into the Rue de la Chanvrerie.

Gavroche, completely carried away and radiant, charged himself with making all ready. He went, came, mounted, descended, remounted, bustled, sparkled. He seemed to be there for the encouragement of all.

"Cheerily? more paving-stones? more barrels? more machines? where are there any? A basket of plaster, to stop that hole. It is too small, your barricade. It must go higher. Pile on everything, brace it with everything. Break up the house. A barricade is Mother Gibou's tea-party. Hold on, there is a glass-door."

This made the labourers exclaim:

"A glass-door? what do you want us to do with a glass-door, tubercle?"

"Hercules yourselves!" retorted Gavroche. "A glass-door in a barricade is excellent. It doesn't prevent attacking it, but it bothers them in taking it. Then you have neither hooked apples over a wall with broken bottles on it? A glass-door, it will cut the corns of the National Guards, when they try to climb over the barricade. Golly! glass is the devil. Ah, now, you haven't an unbridled imagination, my comrades."

He went from one to another, demanding: "A musket? I want a musket? Why don't you give me a musket?"

Enjolras shrugged his shoulders.

"When there are enough for the men we will give them to the children."

Gavroche turned fiercely and answered him:

"If you are killed before me, I will take yours."

"*Gamin!*" said Enjolras.

"Smooth-face?" said Gavroche.

This badinage did not interrupt the work. In less than an

hour the barricade was finished, the flag run up, a table was dragged out of a wine-shop; and Courfeyrac mounted upon the table. Enjolras brought the square box and Courfeyrac opened it. This box was filled with cartridges. When they saw the cartridges, there was a shudder among the bravest, and a moment of silence.

Courfeyrac distributed them with a smile, after which the majority of the party retired to a basement in the wine-shop. The Corinth it was named.

It was now quite night; nothing came. There were only confused sounds and at intervals volleys of musketry; but rare, ill-sustained and distant. This respite, which was thus prolonged, was a sign that the Government was taking its time and massing its forces.

Enjolras felt himself possessed by that impatience which seizes strong souls on the threshold of formidable events. He went to find Gavroche, who had set himself to making cartridges in the basement-room by the doubtful light of two candles, placed upon the counter through precaution on account of the powder scattered over the tables. These two candles threw no rays outside. The insurgents, moreover, had taken care not to have any lights in the upper stories.

Gavroche at this moment was very much engaged, not exactly with his cartridges.

A man had just entered the basement-room and had taken a seat at the table which was least lighted. An infantry musket of large model had fallen to his lot, and he held it between his knees. Gavroche, hitherto distracted by a hundred "amusing" things, had not even seen this man.

When he came in, Gavroche mechanically followed him with his eyes, admiring his musket, then suddenly, when the man had sat down, the *gamin* arose. Had anyone watched this man up to this time, he would have seen him observe everything in the barricade and in the band of insurgents with a singular attention; but since he had come into the room, he had fallen into a kind of meditation and appeared to see nothing more of what was going on. The *gamin* approached this thoughtful personage, and began to turn about him on the points of his toes, as one walks when near somebody whom he fears to awaken. At the same time, over his childish face, at once so saucy and so serious, so flighty and so profound, so cheerful and so touching, there passed all those grimaces of the old which signify: "Oh, bah! impossible! I am befogged! I am dreaming! Can it be? no, it isn't! why yes! why no!" etc. Gavroche balanced himself upon his heels, clenched both fists in his pockets, twisted his neck like a bird, expended in

one measureless pout all the sagacity of his lower lip. He was stupefied, uncertain, credulous, convinced, bewildered. He had the appearance of the chief of the eunuchs in the slave market, discovering a Venus among dumpies, and the air of an amateur recognising a Raphael in a heap of daubs. Everything in him was at work, the instinct which scents and the intellect which combines. It was evident that an event had occurred with Gavroche.

It was in the deepest of this meditation that Enjolras accosted him.

"You are small," said Enjolras, "nobody will see you. Go out of the barricades, glide along by the houses, look about the streets a little, and come and tell me what is going on."

Gavroche straightened himself up.

"Little folks are good for something then; that is very lucky! I will go! Meantime, trust the little folks, distrust the big——" And Gavroche, raising his head and lowering his voice, added, pointing to the man:

"You see that big fellow there?"

"Well."

"He is a spy."

"You are sure?"

"It isn't a fortnight since he pulled me by the ear off the cornice of the Pont Royal where I was taking the air."

Enjolras hastily left the *gamin*, and murmured a few words very low to a working-man from the wine docks who was there. The working-man went out of the room and returned almost immediately, accompanied by three others. The four men, four broad-shouldered porters, placed themselves, without doing anything which could attract his attention, behind the table on which the man was leaning. They were evidently ready to throw themselves upon him.

Then Enjolras approached the man and asked him:

"Who are you?"

At this abrupt question, the man gave a start. He looked straight to the bottom of Enjolras's frank eye and appeared to catch his thought. He smiled with a smile which, of all things in the world, was the most disdainful, the most energetic, and the most resolute, and answered with a haughty gravity:

"I see how it is. Well, yes!"

"You are a spy?"

"I am an officer of the Government."

"Your name is?"

"Javert."

Enjolras made a sign to the four men. In a twinkling,

before Javert had had time to turn around, he was collared, thrown down, bound, searched.

They found upon him a little round card framed between two glasses, and bearing on one side the arms of France, engraved with this legend: *Surveillance et vigilance*, and on the other side this endorsement: JAVERT, inspector of police, aged fifty-two, and the signature of the prefect of police of the time, M. Gisquet.

He had, besides, his watch and his purse, which contained a few gold pieces. They left him his purse and his watch. Under the watch, at the bottom of his fob, they felt and seized a paper in an envelope, which Enjolras opened, and on which he read these six lines, written by the prefect's own hand:

"As soon as his political mission is fulfilled, Inspector Javert will ascertain, by a special examination, whether it be true that malefactors have resorts on the slope of the right bank of the Seine, near the bridge of Jena."

The search finished, they raised Javert, tied his arms behind his back, and fastened him in the middle of the basement-room to that celebrated post which had formerly given its name to the wine-shop.

Gavroche, who had witnessed the whole scene and approved the whole by silent nods of his head, approached Javert and said to him:

"The mouse has caught the cat."

All this was executed so rapidly that it was finished as soon as it was perceived about the wine-shop. Javert had not uttered a cry. Seeing Javert tied to the post, Courfeyrac, Bossuet, Joly, Combeferre, and the men scattered about the two barricades, ran in.

Javert, backed up against the post, and so surrounded with ropes that he could make no movement, held up his head with the intrepid serenity of the man who has never lied.

"It is a spy," said Enjolras.

And turning towards Javert:

"You will be shot ten minutes before the barricade is taken."

Javert replied in his most imperious tone:

"Why not immediately?"

"We are economising powder."

"Then do it with a knife."

"Spy," said the handsome Enjolras, "we are judges, not assassins."

Then he called Gavroche.

"You! go about your business! Do what I told you."

"I am going," cried Gavroche.

And stopping just as he was starting:

"By the way, you will give me his musket!" And he added: "I leave you the musician, but I want the clarionet."

The *gamin* made a military salute, and sprang gaily through the opening in the large barricade.

CHAPTER XIV

That voice which through the twilight had called Marius to the barricade of the Rue de la Chanvrière sounded to him like the voice of destiny. He wished to die, the opportunity presented itself; he was knocking at the door of the tomb, a hand in the shadow held out the key.

He began to walk rapidly. It happened that he was armed, having Javert's pistols with him. He followed the Rue Saint Honoré. As he receded from the Palais Royal, there were fewer lighted windows; the shops were entirely closed, nobody was chatting in the doors, the street grew gloomy, and at the same time the throng grew dense.

After having crossed the belt of the multitude and passed the fringe of troops, he found himself in the midst of something terrible. Not a passer more, not a soldier, not a light; nobody. Solitude, silence, night; a mysterious chill which seized upon him. To enter a street was to enter a cellar.

A little beyond the black corner of the alley and the Rue de la Chanvrière, which threw a broad shadow, in which he was himself buried, he perceived a light upon the pavement, a portion of the wine-shop, and behind, a lamp twinkling in a kind of shapeless wall, and men crouching down with muskets on their knees. All this was within twenty yards of him. It was the interior of the barricade.

The houses on the right of the alley hid from him the rest of the wine-shop, the great barricade, and the flag.

Marius had but one step more to take when a sound of steps, measured, heavy, numerous, was distinctly heard from the direction of Saint Lou. This sound, at first faint, then distinct, then heavy and sonorous, approached slowly, without halt, without interruption, with a tranquil and terrible continuity. Nothing but this could be heard. It was at once the silence and the sound of the statue of the Commander, but this stony tread was so indescribably enormous and so multiplex that it called up at the same time the idea of a throng and of a spectre. You would have thought you heard the stride of the fearful statue Legion. This tread approached; it approached still nearer, and stopped. They seemed to hear

at the end of the street the breathing of many men. They saw nothing, however, only they discovered at the very end in that dense obscurity, a multitude of metallic threads as fine as needles and almost imperceptible, which moved about like those indescribable phosphoric networks which we perceive under our closed eyelids at the moment of going to sleep in the first mists of slumber. They were bayonets and musket barrels dimly lighted up by the distant reflection of the torch.

There was still a pause, as if on both sides they were awaiting. Suddenly, from the depth of that shadow, a voice, so much the more ominous because nobody could be seen, and because it seemed as if it were the obscurity itself which was speaking, cried:

"Who is there?"

At the same time they heard the click of the levelled muskets.

Enjolras answered in a lofty and ringing tone:

"French Revolution!"

"Fire!" said the voice.

A flash empurpled all the façades on the street, as if the door of a furnace were opened and suddenly closed.

A fearful explosion burst over the barricade. The red flag fell. The volley had been so heavy and so dense that it had cut the staff, that is to say, the very point of the pole of the omnibus. Some balls, which ricocheted from the cornices of the houses, entered the barricade and wounded several men.

The moment was critical. It was that first fearful instant of the inundation, when the stream rises to the level of the bank and when the water begins to infiltrate through the fissures in the dyke. A second more and the barricade had been taken.

Bahorel sprang upon the first Municipal Guard who entered, and killed him at the very muzzle of his carbine; the second killed Bahorel with his bayonet. Another had already prostrated Courfeyrac, who was crying "Help!" The largest of all, a kind of Colossus, marched upon Gavroche with fixed bayonet. The *gamin* took Javert's enormous musket in his little arms, aimed it resolutely at the giant, and pulled the trigger. Nothing went off. Javert had not loaded his musket. The Municipal Guard burst into a laugh, and raised his bayonet over the child.

Before the bayonet touched Gavroche, the musket dropped from the soldier's hands; a ball had struck the Municipal Guard in the middle of the forehead, and he fell on his back. A second ball struck the other Guard, who had assailed Courfeyrac, full in the breast, and threw him upon the pavement.

It was Marius who had just entered the barricade. He had now no arms; he had thrown away his discharged pistols, but he had noticed the keg of powder in the basement-room near the door.

As he turned half round, looking in that direction, a soldier aimed at him. At the moment the soldier aimed at Marius, a hand was laid upon the muzzle of the musket and stopped it. It was somebody who had sprung forward, a young working-man with velvet pantaloons. The shot went off, passed through the hand, and perhaps also through the working-man, for he fell, but the ball did not reach Marius. All this in the smoke, rather guessed than seen. Marius, who was entering the basement-room, hardly noticed it. Still he had caught a dim glimpse of that musket directed at him, and that hand which had stopped it, and he had heard the shot. But in moments like that, the things which we see waver and rush headlong, and we stop for nothing. We feel ourselves vaguely pushed towards still deeper shadow, and all is cloud.

The insurgents, surprised, but not dismayed, had rallied. Enjolras had cried: "Wait! don't fire at random!" In the first confusion, in fact, they might hit one another. Most of them had gone up to the window of the second storey and to the dormer windows, whence they commanded the assailants. The most determined, with Enjolras, Courfeyrac, Jean Prouvaire and Combeferre, had haughtily placed their backs to the houses in the rear, openly facing the ranks of soldiers and guards which crowded the barricade.

All this was accomplished without precipitation, with that strange and threatening gravity which precedes *mêlées*. On both sides they were taking aim, the muzzles of the guns almost touching; they were so near that they could talk with each other in an ordinary tone. Just as the spark was about to fly, an officer in a gorget and with huge epaulets, extended his sword and said:

"Take aim!"

"Fire!" said Enjolras.

The two explosions were simultaneous, and everything disappeared in the smoke.

A stinging and stifling smoke, amid which writhed, with dull and feeble groans, the wounded and the dying.

When the smoke cleared away, on both sides the combatants were seen, thinned out, but still in the same places, and reloading their pieces in silence.

Suddenly, a thundering voice was heard, crying:

"Begone, or I'll blow up the barricade!"

All turned in the direction whence the voice came.

Marius had entered the basement-room, and had taken the keg of powder; then he had profited by the smoke and the kind of obscure fog which filled the entrenched enclosure to glide along the barricade as far as that cage of paving-stones in which the torch was fixed. To pull out the torch, to put the keg of powder in its place, to push the pile of paving-stones upon the keg, which stove it in, with a sort of terrible-self-control—all this had been for Marius the work of stooping down and rising up; and now all, National Guards, Municipal Guards, officers, soldiers, grouped at the other extremity of the barricade, beheld him with horror, his foot upon the stones, the torch in his hand, his stern face lighted by a deadly resolution, bending the flame of the torch towards that formidable pile in which they discerned the broken barrel of powder, and uttering that terrific cry:

“Begone, or I’ll blow up the barricade!”

Marius upon this barricade, after the octogenarian, was the vision of the young revolution after the apparition of the old.

“Blow up the barricade!” said a sergeant, “and yourself also!”

Marius answered:

“And myself also.”

And he approached the torch to the keg of powder.

But there was no longer anybody on the wall. The assailants, leaving their dead and wounded, fled pell-mell and in disorder towards the extremity of the street, and were again lost in the night. It was a rout.

All flocked round Marius. Courfeyrac sprang to his neck.

“You here!”

“How fortunate!” said Combeferre.

“You came in good time!” said Bossuet.

“Without you I should have been dead!” continued Courfeyrac.

“Without you I’d been gobbled!” added Gavroche.

Marius inquired:

“Where is the chief?”

“You are the chief,” said Enjolras.

Marius had all day had a furnace in his brain, now it was a whirlwind. He was a spectator of his own drama, as of a play which one does not comprehend.

As they were making an inspection, Marius heard his name faintly pronounced in the obscurity:

“Monsieur Marius!”

He shuddered, for he recognised the voice which had called him two hours before, through the grating in the Rue Plumet.

Only this voice now seemed to be but a breath.

He looked about him and saw nobody.

Marius thought he was deceived, and that it was an illusion added by his mind to the extraordinary realities which were thronging about him. He started to leave the retired recess in which the barricade was situated.

"Monsieur Marius!" repeated the voice.

This time he could not doubt, he had heard distinctly; he looked, and saw nothing.

"At your feet," said the voice.

He stooped and saw a form in the shadow, which was dragging itself towards him. It was crawling along the pavement. It was this that had spoken to him.

The lamp enabled him to distinguish a blouse, a pair of torn pantaloons of coarse velvet, bare feet, and something which resembled a pool of blood. Marius caught a glimpse of a pale face which rose towards him and said to him:

"You do not know me?"

"No."

"Eponine."

Marius bent down quickly. It was indeed that unhappy child. She was dressed as a man.

"How came you here? what are you doing there?"

"I am dying," said she.

There are words and incidents which rouse beings who are crushed. Marius exclaimed, with a start:

"You are wounded! Wait, I will carry you into the room! They will dress your wounds! Is it serious? How shall I take you up so as not to hurt you? Where are you hurt? Help! my God! But what did you come here for?"

And he tried to pass his arm under her to lift her.

In lifting her he touched her hand.

She uttered a feeble cry.

"Have I hurt you?" asked Marius.

"A little."

"But I have only touched your hand."

She raised her hand into Marius's sight, and Marius saw in the centre of that hand a black hole.

"What is the matter with your hand?" said he.

"It is pierced."

"Pierced?"

"Yes."

"By what?"

"By a ball."

"How?"

"Did you see a musket aimed at you?"

"Yes, and a hand which stopped it."

"That was mine."

Marius shuddered.

"What madness! Poor child! But that is not so bad, if that is all; it is nothing; let me carry you to a bed. They will care for you; people don't die from a shot in the hand."

She murmured:

"The ball passed through my hand, but it went out through my back. It is useless to take me from here. I will tell you how you can care for me, better than a surgeon. Sit down by me on that stone."

He obeyed; she laid her head on Marius's knees, and without looking at him, she said:

"Oh, how good it is! How kind he is! It was I who led you into this, it was! You are going to die, I am sure. And still, when I saw him aiming at you, I put my hand upon the muzzle of the musket. How droll it is! But it was because I wanted to die before you. When I got this ball, I dragged myself here; nobody saw me, nobody picked me up. I waited for you, I said: He will not come then? Oh, if you knew, I bit my blouse, I suffered so much! Now I am well. Do you remember the day when I came into your room, and when I looked at myself in your mirror, and the day when I met you on the boulevard near some work-women? How the birds sang! It was not very long ago. You gave me a hundred sous, and I said to you: I don't want your money. Do you remember, Monsieur Marius? Oh, I am happy! We are all going to die."

She had a wandering, grave and touching air. Her torn blouse showed her bare throat. While she was talking she rested her wounded hand upon her breast where there was another hole, from which there came with each pulsation a flow of blood like a jet of wine from an open bung.

Marius gazed upon this unfortunate creature with profound compassion. She was sitting almost upright, but her voice was very low and broken by hiccoughs. At intervals the death-rattle interrupted her. She approached her face as near as she could to Marius's face. She added, with a strange expression:

"Listen; I don't want to deceive you. I have a letter in my pocket for you. Since yesterday, I was told to put it in the post. I kept it. I didn't want it to reach you. But you would not like it of me, perhaps, when we meet again so soon. We do meet again, don't we? Take your letter."

She grasped Marius's hand convulsively with her wounded hand, but she seemed no longer to feel the pain. She put

Marius's hand into the pocket of her blouse. Marius really felt a paper there.

"Take it," said she.

Marius took the letter.

She let her head fall back upon Marius's knees and her eyelids closed. He thought that poor soul had gone. Eponine lay motionless; but just when Marius supposed her for ever asleep, she slowly opened her eyes in which the gloomy deepness of death appeared, and said to him with an accent the sweetness of which seemed already to come from another world:

"And then, do you know, Monsieur Marius, I believe I was a little in love with you."

She essayed to smile again and expired.

Marius had not taken the letter which Eponine had given him without a thrill. He was impatient to read it. The heart of man is thus made; the unfortunate child had hardly closed her eyes when Marius thought to unfold this paper. He laid her gently upon the ground and went away. Something told him that he could not read that letter in sight of this corpse.

He went to a candle in the basement-room. It was a little note, folded and sealed with the elegant care of women. The address was in a woman's hand, and ran:

"To Monsieur, Monsieur Marius Pontmercy, at M. Courfeyrac's, Rue de la Verrerie, No. 16."

He broke the seal, and read:

"My beloved, alas! my father wishes to start immediately. We shall be to-night in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7. In a week we shall be in England.—COSETTE.
June 4th."

What happened may be told in a few words. Eponine had done it all. After the evening of the 3rd of June she had had a double thought, to thwart the projects of her father and the bandits upon the house in the Rue Plumet, and to separate Marius from Cosette. She had changed rags with the first young rogue who thought it amusing to dress as a woman while Eponine disguised herself as a man. At this time, Cosette saw, through the grating, Eponine in man's clothes, who was now prowling continually about the garden. Cosette called "this young working-man" and handed him five francs and the letter, saying to him: "Carry this letter to its address right away." Eponine put the letter in her pocket. The next day, June 5th, she went to the Rue Plumet, waited there for Marius, and sent him, in the name of his friends, that appeal which must, she thought, lead him to the barricade. She

counted upon Marius's despair when he should not find Cosette; she was not mistaken. She returned herself to the Rue de la Chanvrerie. We have seen what she did there. She died with that tragic joy of jealous hearts which drags the being they love into death with them, saying: Nobody shall have him!

Marius covered Cosette's letter with kisses. She loved him then? He had for a moment the idea that now he need not die. Then he said to himself: "She is going away. Her father takes her to England, and my grandfather refuses to consent to the marriage. Nothing is changed in the fatality." He had a pocket-book with him. He tore out a leaf and wrote with a pencil these few lines:

"Our marriage was impossible. I have asked my grandfather, he has refused; I am without fortune, and you also. I ran to your house, I did not find you. You know the promise that I gave you? I keep it, I die, I love you. When you read this, my soul will be near you, and will smile upon you."

Having nothing to seal this letter with, he merely folded the paper, and wrote upon it this address:

"To Mademoiselle Cosette Fauchelevent, at M. Fauchelevent's, Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7."

The letter folded, he remained a moment in thought, took his pocket-book again, opened it, and wrote these four lines on the first page with the same pencil:

"My name is Marius Pontmercy. Carry my corpse to my grandfather's, M. Gillenormand, Rue des Filles du Calvaire, No. 6, in the Marais."

He put the book into his coat-pocket, then he called Gavroche. The *gamin*, at the sound of Marius's voice, ran up with his joyous and devoted face:

"Will you do something for me?"

"Anything," said Gavroche. "God of the good God! without you, I should have been cooked, sure."

"You see this letter?"

"Yes."

"Take it. Go out of the barricade immediately" (Gavroche, disturbed, began to scratch his ear), "and to-morrow morning you will carry it to its address, to Mademoiselle Cosette, at M. Fauchelevent's, Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7."

The heroic boy answered:

"Ah, well, but in that time they'll take the barricade, and I shan't be here."

"The barricade will not be attacked again before daybreak,

according to all appearance, and will not be taken before to-morrow noon. Go, right away!"

Gavroche had nothing more to say; he stood there, undecided, and sadly scratching his ear. Suddenly, with one of his birdlike motions, he took the letter:

"All right," said he.

And he started off on a run by the little Rue Mondétour.

Gavroche had an idea which decided him, but which he did not tell, for fear Marius would make some objection to it.

That idea was this:

"It is hardly midnight, the Rue de l'Homme Armé is not far, I will carry the letter right away, and I shall get back in time."

CHAPTER XV

On the eve of that same day, June 5th, Jean Valjean, accompanied by Cosette and Toussaint, had installed himself in the Rue de l'Homme Armé. A sudden turn of fortune awaited him there.

Cosette had not left the Rue Plumet without an attempt at resistance. For the first time since they had lived together, Cosette's will and Jean Valjean's will had shown themselves distinct, and had been, if not conflicting, at least contradictory. There was objection on one side and inflexibility on the other.

They both arrived in the Rue de l'Homme Armé without opening their mouths or saying a word, absorbed in their personal meditations. They went silently to bed.

Next morning Jean Valjean woke almost cheerful. He thought the dining-room charming, although it was hideous, furnished with an old round table, a low sideboard surmounted by a hanging mirror, a worm-eaten arm-chair, and a few other chairs loaded down with Toussaint's bundles. Through an opening in one of these bundles, Jean Valjean's National Guard uniform could be seen.

As for Cosette, she had Toussaint bring a bowl of soup to her room, and did not make her appearance till evening.

About five o'clock, Toussaint, who was coming and going, very busy with this little removal, set a cold fowl on the dining-room table, which Cosette, out of deference to her father, consented to look at.

This done, Cosette, upon pretext of a severe headache, said good-night to Jean Valjean, and shut herself up in her bedroom. Jean Valjean ate a chicken's wing with a good appetite,

and, leaning on the table, clearing his brow little by little, was regaining his sense of security.

While he was making this frugal dinner, he became confusedly aware, on two or three occasions, of the stammering of Toussaint, who said to him: "Monsieur, there is a row; they are fighting in Paris." But, absorbed in a multitude of interior combinations, he paid no attention to it. To tell the truth, he had not heard.

He arose, and began to walk from the window to the door, and from the door to the window, growing calmer and calmer.

While yet walking up and down with slow steps, his eye suddenly met something strange.

He perceived facing him, in the inclined mirror which hung above the sideboard, and he distinctly read, the four lines which follow:

"My beloved, alas! my father wishes to start immediately. We shall be to-night in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7. In a week we shall be in England.—COSETTE. June 4th."

Jean Valjean stood aghast.

Cosette, on arriving, had laid her blotter on the sideboard before the mirror, and, wholly absorbed in her sorrowful anguish, had forgotten it there, without even noticing that she left it wide open, and open exactly at the page upon which she had dried the four lines written by her, and which she had given in charge to the young workman passing through the Rue Plumet. The writing was imprinted upon the blotter. The mirror reflected the writing.

Jean Valjean tottered, let the blotter fall, and sank down into the old arm-chair by the sideboard, his head drooping, his eye glassy, bewildered. He said to himself that it was clear, and that the light of the world was for ever eclipsed, and that Cosette had written that to somebody. Then he heard his soul, again become terrible, give a sullen roar in the darkness. Go, then, and take from the lion the dog which he has in his cage.

His instinct did not hesitate. He put together certain circumstances, certain dates, certain blushes, and certain pallors of Cosette, and he said to himself: "It is he." The divination of despair is a sort of mysterious bow which never misses its aim. With his first conjecture he hit Marius. He did not know the name, but he found the man at once. After he had fully determined that that young man was at the bottom of this state of affairs, and that it all came from him, he, Jean Valjean, the regenerated man, the man who had laboured so much upon his soul, the man who had made so many efforts to resolve all

life, all misery, and all misfortune into love; he looked within himself, and there he saw a spectre: Hatred.

While he was thinking, Toussaint entered. Jean Valjean rose, and asked her:

"In what direction is it? Do you know?"

Toussaint, astonished, could only answer:

"If you please?"

Jean Valjean resumed:

"Didn't you tell me just now that they were fighting?"

"Oh! yes, monsieur," answered Toussaint. "It is over by Saint Merry."

There are some mechanical impulses which come to us, without our knowledge even, from our deepest thoughts. It was doubtless under the influence of an impulse of this kind, and of which he was hardly conscious, that Jean Valjean five minutes afterwards found himself in the street.

He was bare-headed, seated upon the stone block by the door of his house. He seemed to be listening.

Suddenly he raised his eyes, somebody was walking in the street, he heard steps near him; he looked, and, by the light of the lamp, in the direction of the Archives, he perceived a livid face, young and radiant.

Gavroche was looking in the air, and appeared to be searching for something. He saw Jean Valjean perfectly, but he took no notice of him.

Gavroche, after looking into the air, looked on the ground; he raised himself on tiptoe and felt of the doors and windows of the ground floors; they were all closed, bolted and chained. After having found five or six houses barricaded in this way, the *gamin* shrugged his shoulders and took counsel with himself in these terms:

"Golly!"

Then he began to look into the air again.

Jean Valjean, who, the instant before, in the state of mind in which he was, would not have spoken nor even replied to anybody, felt irresistibly impelled to address a word to this child.

"Small boy," said he, "what is the matter with you?"

"The matter is that I am hungry," answered Gavroche tartly. And he added: "Small yourself."

Jean Valjean felt in his pocket and took out a five-franc piece.

"Poor creature," said he, in an undertone, and speaking to himself, "he is hungry."

And he put the hundred sous piece into his hand.

Gavroche cocked up his nose, astonished at the size of this

big sou; he looked at it in the dark, and the whiteness of the big sou dazzled him. He knew five franc pieces by hearsay; their reputation was agreeable to him; he was delighted to see one so near. He said: "Let us contemplate the tiger."

He gazed at it for a few moments in ecstacy; then, turning towards Jean Valjean, he handed him the piece, and said majestically:

"Bourgeois, you don't corrupt me. It has five claws; but it don't scratch me."

"Well," replied Jean Valjean, "keep this money for your mother."

Gavroche felt softened. Besides, he had just noticed that the man who was talking to him had no hat, and that inspired him with confidence.

"You are a fine fellow," said Gavroche.

And he put the five-franc piece into one of his pockets.

His confidence increasing, he added:

"Could you show me number seven?"

"What do you want with number seven?"

Here the boy stopped; he feared that he had said too much; he plunged his nails vigorously into his hair, and merely answered:

"Ah! that's it."

An idea flashed across Jean Valjean's mind. Anguish has such lucidities. He said to the child:

"Have you brought the letter I am waiting for?"

"You?" said Gavroche. "You are not a woman."

"The letter is for Mademoiselle Cosette, isn't it?"

"Cosette?" muttered Gavroche. "Yes, I believe it is that funny name."

"Well," resumed Jean Valjean, "I am to deliver the letter to her. Give it to me."

"In that case you must know that I am sent from the barricade?"

"Of course," said Jean Valjean.

Gavroche thrust his hand into another of his pockets, drew out a folded paper, and handed it to Jean Valjean.

"And hurry yourself, Monsieur What's-your-name, for Mamselle What's-her-name is waiting."

Gavroche was proud of having produced this word.

Jean Valjean asked:

"Is it to Saint Merry that the answer is to be sent?"

"In that case," exclaimed Gavroche, "you would make one of those cakes vulgarly called blunders. That letter comes from the barricade in the Rue de la Chanvrière, and I am going back there. Good-night, citizen."

This said, Gavroche went away, or, rather, resumed his flight like an escaped bird towards the spot whence he came, while Jean Valjean went in with Marius's letter.

He groped his way upstairs, pleased with the darkness, like an owl which holds his prey, opened and softly closed the door, listened to see if he heard any sound, decided that, according to all appearances, Cosette and Toussaint were asleep. There was theft in what he was about to do. At last his candle was lighted; he leaned his elbows on the table, unfolded the paper, and read.

In violent emotions, we do not read, we prostrate the paper which we hold, so to speak, we strangle it like a victim, we crush the paper, we bury the nails of our wrath or of our delight in it; we run to the end, we leap to the beginning; the attention has a fever; it comprehends by wholesale, almost, the essential; it seizes a point, and all the rest disappears. In Marius's note to Cosette, Jean Valjean saw only these words:

"—I die. When you read this, my soul will be near you."

Before these two lines he was horribly dazzled; he sat a moment as if crushed by the change of emotion which was wrought within him, he looked at Marius's note with a sort of drunken astonishment. He had before his eyes that splendour, the death of the hated being.

He uttered a hideous cry of inward joy. So, it was finished. He had only to keep the note in his pocket. Cosette would never know what had become of "that man." "I have only to let things take their course. That man cannot escape. If he is not dead yet, it is certain that he will die. What happiness!"

All this said within himself, he became gloomy.

Then he went down and waked the porter.

About an hour afterwards, Jean Valjean went out in the full dress of a National Guard, and armed. The porter had easily found in the neighbourhood what was necessary to complete his equipment. He had a loaded musket and a cartridge-box full of cartridges. He went in the direction of the markets, and within an hour was in the Rue de la Chanvrière. Whether by information obtained, or by instinct, or by chance, he came by the little Rue Mondétour. Thanks to his National Guard dress, he had passed easily.

The sentry placed by the insurgents in the Rue Mondétour had not given the signal of alarm for a single National Guard. He permitted him to get into the street, saying to himself: "He is a reinforcement, probably, and at the very worst a prisoner." The moment was too serious for the sentinel to be diverted from his duty and his post of observation.

At the moment Jean Valjean entered the redoubt, he stripped off his coat.

The commotion was indescribable.

"Who is this man?" asked Bossuet.

Marius replied in a grave voice:

"I know him."

This assurance was enough for all.

Enjolras turned towards Jean Valjean:

"Citizen, you are welcome."

He then thought of the one condemned to death. He went into the basement-room. Javert, tied to the pillar, was thinking.

"Do you need anything?" Enjolras asked him.

Javert answered:

"When shall you kill me?"

"Wait. We need all our cartridges at present."

"Then, give me a drink," said Javert.

Enjolras presented him with a glass of water himself, and, as Javert was bound, he helped him to drink.

"Is that all?" resumed Enjolras.

"I am uncomfortable at this post," answered Javert. "It was not affectionate to leave me to pass the night here. Tie me as you please, but you can surely lay me on a table."

At Enjolras's order, four insurgents untied Javert from the post. While they were untying him, a fifth held a bayonet to his breast. They left his hands tied behind his back, they put a small yet strong whipcord about his feet, which permitted him to take fifteen-inch steps like those who are mounting the scaffold, and they made him walk to the table at the back of the room, on which they extended him, tightly bound by the middle of his body.

For greater security, by means of a rope fixed to his neck, they added to the system of bonds which rendered all escape impossible, that species of ligature, called in the prisons a martingale, which, starting from the back of the neck divides over the stomach, and is fastened to the hands after passing between the legs.

While they were binding Javert, a man, on the threshold of the door, gazed at him with singular attention. The shade which this man produced made Javert turn his head. He raised his eyes and recognised Jean Valjean. He did not even start, he haughtily dropped his eyelids, and merely said: "It is very natural."

It was growing light rapidly. But not a window was opened, not a door stood ajar; it was the dawn, not the hour of awakening. The extremity of the Rue de la Chanvrerie opposite the barricade had been evacuated by the troops, as we have said:

it seemed free, and lay open for wayfarers with an ominous tranquillity. The Rue Saint Denis was as silent as the avenue of the Sphinxes at Thebes. Not a living being at the corners, which were whitening in a reflection of the sun. Nothing is so dismal as this brightness of deserted streets.

They saw nothing, but they heard. A mysterious movement was taking place at some distance. It was evident that the critical moment was at hand. As in the evening, the sentries were driven in; but this time all.

They had not long to wait. Activity distinctly recommenced in the direction of Saint Leu, but it did not resemble the movement of the first attack. A rattle of chains, the menacing jolt of a mass, a clicking of brass bounding over the pavement, a sort of solemn uproar, announced that an ominous body of iron was approaching. There was a shudder in the midst of those peaceful old streets, cut through and built up for the fruitful circulation of interests and ideas, and which were not made for the monstrous rumbling of the wheels of war.

The stare of all the combatants upon the extremity of the street became wild.

A piece of artillery appeared.

The gunners pushed forward the piece; it was all ready to be loaded; the fore wheels had been removed; two supported the carriage, four were at the wheels, others followed with the caisson. The smoke of the burning match was seen.

"Fire!" cried Enjolras.

The whole barricade flashed fire, the explosion was terrible: an avalanche of smoke covered and effaced the gun and the men; in a few seconds the cloud dissipated and the cannon and the men reappeared; those in charge of the piece placed it in position in front of the barricade, slowly, correctly, and without haste. Not a man had been touched. Then the gunner, bearing his weight on the breech, to elevate the range, began to point the cannon with the gravity of an astronomer adjusting a telescope.

"Bravo for the gunners!" cried Bossuet.

And the whole barricade clapped hands.

A moment afterwards, placed squarely in the very middle of the street, astride of the gutter, the gun was in battery. A formidable mouth was opened upon the barricade.

How was the facing of the barricade going to behave under fire? Would the shot make a breach? That was the question. There was intense anxiety in the redoubt.

The gun went off; the detonation burst upon them.

"Present!" cried a cheerful voice.

And at the same time with the ball, Gavroche tumbled into the barricade.

He came by way of the Rue de Cygne, and he had nimbly clambered over the minor barricade, which fronted upon the labyrinth of the Petite Trianderie.

Gavroche produced more effect in the barricade than the ball.

The ball lost itself in the jumble of the rubbish. At the very utmost it broke a wheel of the omnibus, and finished the old Anceau cart. Seeing which, the barricade began to laugh. Marius, shuddering, took the boy aside.

"What have you come here for?"

"Hold on!" said the boy. "What have you come for?"

And he looked straight at Marius with his epic effrontery. His eyes grew large with the proud light which was in them.

Marius continued, in a stern tone:

"Who told you to come back? At least you carried my letter to its address?"

Gavroche had some little remorse in relation to that letter. In his haste to return to the barricade, he had got rid of it rather than delivered it. He was compelled to acknowledge to himself that he had entrusted it rather rashly to that stranger, whose face even he could not distinguish. True, this man was bareheaded, but that was not enough. On the whole, he had some little interior remonstrances on this subject, and he feared Marius's reproaches. He took, to get out of the trouble, the simplest course; he lied abominably.

"Citizen, I carried the letter to the porter. The lady was asleep. She will get the letter when she wakes up."

Marius, in sending this letter, had two objects: to say farewell to Cosette and to save Gavroche. He was obliged to be content with the half of what he intended.

The sending of his letter, and the presence of M. Fauchelevent in the barricade, this coincidence occurred to his mind. He pointed out M. Fauchelevent to Gavroche.

"Do you know that man?"

"No," said Gavroche.

Gavroche, in fact, as we have just mentioned, had only seen Jean Valjean in the night.

Meanwhile Enjolras, on his battlement, was watching, listening with intense attention.

The assailants, dissatisfied doubtless with the effect of their fire, had not repeated it.

A company of infantry of the line had come in and occupied the extremity of the street, in the rear of the gun. The soldiers tore up the pavement, and with the stones constructed

a little low wall, a sort of breastwork, which was hardly more than eighteen inches high, and which fronted the barricade. At the corner, on the left of this breastwork, they saw the head of the column of a battalion of the *banlieue* massed in the Rue St. Denis.

Enjolras, on the watch, thought he distinguished the peculiar sound which is made when canisters of grape are taken from the caisson, and he saw the gunner change the aim and incline the piece slightly to the left. Then the cannoneers began to load. The gunner seized the linstock himself and brought it near the touch-hole.

"Heads down, keep close to the wall!" cried Enjolras, "and all on your knees along the barricade!"

The insurgents, who were scattered in front of the wine-shop, and who had left their posts of combat on Gavroche's arrival, rushed pell-mell towards the barricade; but before Enjolras's order was executed, the discharge took place with the fearful rattle of grape-shot. It was so in fact.

The charge was directed at the opening of the redoubt, it ricocheted upon the wall, and this terrible ricochet killed two men and wounded three.

If that continued, the barricade was no longer tenable. It was not proof against grape.

There was a sound of consternation.

"Let us prevent the second shot, at any rate," said Enjolras.

And, lowering his carbine, he aimed at the gunner, who, at that moment, bending over the breach of the gun, was correcting and finally adjusting the aim.

This gunner was a fine-looking sergeant of artillery, quite young, of fair complexion, with a very mild face, and the intelligent air peculiar to that predestined and formidable arm which, by perfecting itself in horror, must end in killing war.

Combeferre, standing near Enjolras, looked at this young man.

"What a pity!" said Combeferre. "What a hideous thing these butcheries are! Come, when there are no more kings there will be no more war. Enjolras, you are aiming at that sergeant, you are not looking at him. Just think that he is a charming young man; he is intrepid; you see that he is a thinker; these young artillerymen are well educated; he has a father, a mother, a family; he is in love, probably; he is at most twenty-five years old; he might be your brother."

"He is," said Enjolras.

"Yes," said Combeferre, "and mine also. Well, don't let us kill him."

"Let me alone. We must do what we must."

And a tear rolled slowly down Enjolras's marble cheek.

At the same time he pressed the trigger of his carbine. The flash leaped forth. The artilleryman turned twice round, his arms stretched out before him, and his head raised as if to drink the air, then he fell over on his side upon the gun, and lay there motionless. His back could be seen, from the centre of which a stream of blood gushed upwards. The ball had entered his breast and passed through his body. He was dead.

It was necessary to carry him away and to replace him. It was, indeed, some minutes gained.

There was confusion in the counsel of the barricade. The gun was about to be fired again. They could not hold out a quarter of an hour in that storm of grape. It was absolutely necessary to deaden the blows.

Enjolras threw out his command:

"We must put a mattress there."

"We have none," said Combeferre; "the wounded are on them."

Jean Valjean, seated apart on a block, at the corner of the wine-shop, his musket between his knees, had, up to this moment, taken no part in what was going on. He seemed not to hear the combatants about him say: "There is a musket which is doing nothing!"

At the order given by Enjolras he got up.

On the arrival of the company in the Rue de la Chanvrière, an old woman, foreseeing bullets, had put her mattress before her window. This window, a garret window, was on the roof of a house of six storeys, standing a little outside of the barricade. The mattress, placed crosswise, rested at the bottom upon two clothes-poles, and was sustained above by two ropes which, in the distance, seemed like threads, and which were fastened to nails driven into the window casing. These two ropes could be seen distinctly against the sky like hairs.

"Can somebody lend me a double-barrelled carbine?" said Jean Valjean.

Enjolras, who had just reloaded his, handed it to him.

Jean Valjean aimed at the window and fired.

One of the two ropes of the mattress was cut.

The mattress now hung only by one thread.

Jean Valjean fired the second barrel. The second rope struck the glass of the window. The mattress slid down between the two poles and fell into the street.

The barricade applauded.

All cried:

"There is a mattress."

"Yes," said Combeferre, "but who will go after it?"

The mattress had, in fact, fallen outside of the barricade, between the besieged and the besiegers. Now, the death of the gunner having exasperated the troops, the soldiers, for some moments, had been lying on their faces behind the line of paving-stones which they had raised, and, to make up for the compulsory silence of the gun, which was quiet while its service was being reorganised, they had opened fire on the barricade. The insurgents made no response to this musketry, to spare their ammunition. The fusillade was broken against the barricade; but the street, which it filled with balls, was terrible.

Jean Valjean went out at the opening, entered the street, passed through the storm of balls, went to the mattress picked it up, put it on his back, and returned to the barricade.

He put the mattress into the opening himself. He fixed it against the wall in such a way that the artillery-men did not see it.

This done, they awaited the charge of grape.

They had not long to wait.

The cannon vomited its package of shot with a roar. But there was no ricochet. The grape miscarried upon the mattress. The desired effect was obtained. The barricade was preserved.

"Citizen," said Enjolras to Jean Valjean, "the republic thanks you."

"This goes well," said Bossuet to Enjolras. "Success."

Enjolras shook his head and answered:

"A quarter of an hour more of this success, and there will not be ten cartridges in the barricade."

It would seem that Gavroche heard this remark. Courfeyrac suddenly perceived somebody at the foot of the barricade, outside in the street, under the balls.

Gavroche had taken a basket from the wine-shop, had gone out by the opening, and was quietly occupied in emptying into his basket the full cartridge-boxes of the National Guards who had been killed on the slope of the redoubt.

"What are you doing there?" said Courfeyrac.

Gavroche cocked up his nose.

"Citizen, I am filling my basket."

"Why, don't you see the grape?"

Gavroche answered:

"Well, it rains. What then?"

Courfeyrac cried:

"Come back!"

"Directly," said Gavroche.

Some twenty dead lay scattered along the whole length of the street on the pavement. Twenty cartridge-boxes for Gavroche, a supply of cartridges for the barricade.

The smoke in the street was like a fog. Whoever has seen a cloud fall into a mountain gorge between two steep slopes can imagine this smoke crowded and as if thickened by two gloomy lines of tall houses. It rose slowly and was constantly renewed; hence a gradual darkening which even rendered broad day pallid. The combatants could hardly perceive each other from end to end of the street, although it was very short.

This obscurity, probably desired and calculated upon by the leaders who were to direct the assault upon the barricade, was of use to Gavroche.

Under the folds of this veil of smoke, and thanks to his small size, he could advance far into the street without being seen. He emptied the first seven or eight cartridge-boxes without much danger.

He crawled on his belly, ran on his hands and feet, took his basket in his teeth, twisted, glided, writhed, wormed his way from one body to another, and emptied a cartridge-box as a monkey opens a nut.

From the barricade, of which he was still within hearing, they dared not call to him to return, for fear of attracting attention to him.

On one corpse, that of a corporal, he found a powder-flask.

"In case of thirst," said he as he put it into his pocket.

By successive advances he reached a point where the fog from the firing became transparent. So that the sharp-shooters of the line drawn up and on the alert behind their wall of paving-stones, and the sharp-shooters of the *banlieue* massed at the corner of the street, suddenly discovered something moving in the smoke.

Just as Gavroche was relieving a sergeant who lay near a stone-block, of his cartridges, a ball struck the body.

"The deuce!" said Gavroche. "So they are killing my dead for me."

A second ball splintered the pavement beside him.

Gavroche looked and saw that it came from the *banlieue*.

He rose up straight, on his feet, his hair in the wind, his hands upon his hips, his eye fixed upon the National Guards who were firing, and he sang:

"On est laid à Nanterre,
C'est la faute à Voltaire,
Et bête à Palaiseau,
C'est la faute à Rousseau."

Then he picked up his basket, put into it the cartridges which had fallen out, without losing a single one, and advancing towards the fusillade, began to empty another cartridge-box. There a fourth ball just missed him again. Gavroche sang:

“Je ne suis pas notaire,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;
Je suis petit oiseau,
C'est la faute à Rousseau.”

A fifth ball succeeded only in drawing a third couplet from him:

“Joie est mon caractère,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;
Misère est mon trousseau,
C'est la faute à Rousseau.”

This continued thus for some time.

One bullet, however, better aimed or more treacherous than the others, reached the Will-o'-the-wisp child. They saw Gavroche totter, then he fell. The whole barricade gave a cry; but there was an Antæus in this pigmy; for the *gamin* to touch the pavement is like the giant touching the earth; Gavroche had fallen only to rise again; he sat up, a long stream of blood rolled down his face, he raised both arms in air, looked in the direction whence the shot came, and began to sing:

“Je suis tombé par terre,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;
La nez dans le ruisseau,
C'est la faute à——”

He did not finish. A second ball from the same marksman cut him short. This time he fell with his face upon the pavement, and did not stir again. That little great soul had taken flight.

CHAPTER XVI

Marius had sprung out of the barricade. Combeferre had followed him. But it was too late. Gavroche was dead. Combeferre brought back the basket of cartridges; Marius brought back the child.

“Alas!” thought he, “what the father had done for his father he was returning to the son; only Thenardier had brought back his father living, while he brought back the child dead.”

When Marius re-entered the redoubt with Gavroche in his arms, his face, like the child's, was covered with blood.

Just as he had stooped down to pick up Gavroche, a ball grazed his skull; he did not perceive it.

Courfeyrac took off his cravat and bound up Marius's forehead.

Combeferre distributed the cartridges from the basket which he had brought back. This gave each man fifteen shots.

Jean Valjean was still at the same place, motionless upon his block. When Combeferre presented him his fifteen cartridges, he shook his head.

"There is a rare eccentric," said Combeferre in a low tone to Enjolras. "He finds means not to fight in this barricade."

"Which does not prevent him from defending it," answered Enjolras.

"Heroism has its originals," replied Combeferre.

As the defenders of a barricade are always obliged to husband their ammunition, and as the besiegers know it, the besiegers perfect their arrangements with a sort of provoking leisure, expose themselves to fire before the time, but in appearance more than in reality, and take their ease. The preparations for attacks are always made with a certain methodical slowness; after which, the thunderbolt.

This slowness allowed Enjolras to look over the whole, and to perfect the whole. He felt that since such men were to die, their death should be a masterpiece.

He said to Marius: "We are the two chiefs; I will give the last orders within. You stay outside and watch."

He gave his last instructions in the basement-room in a quick but deep and calm voice; these dispositions made, he turned towards Javert, and said to him:

"I won't forget you."

And, laying a pistol on the table, he added:

"The last man to leave this room will blow out the spy's brains!"

"Here?" inquired a voice.

"No, do not leave this corpse with ours. You can climb over the little barricade on the Rue Mondétour. It is only four feet high. The man is well tied. You will take him there, and execute him there."

There was one man, at that moment, who was more impossible than Enjolras; it was Javert.

Here Jean Valjean reappeared.

He was in the throng of insurgents. He stepped forward, and said to Enjolras:

"You are the commander?"

"Yes."

"You thanked me just now."

"In the name of the Republic. The barricade has two saviours, Marius Pontmercy and you."

"Do you think that I deserve a reward?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I ask one."

"What?"

"To blow out that man's brains myself."

Javert raised his head, saw Jean Valjean, made an imperceptible movement, and said:

"That is appropriate."

As for Enjolras, he had begun to reload his carbine; he cast his eyes about him:

"No objection."

And turning towards Jean Valjean:

"Take the spy."

Jean Valjean, in fact, took possession of Javert by sitting down on the end of the table. He caught up the pistol, and a slight click announced that he had cocked it.

Almost at the same moment, they heard a flourish of trumpets.

"Come on!" cried Marius, from the top of the barricade.

Javert began to laugh with that noiseless laugh which was peculiar to him, and, looking fixedly upon the insurgents, said to them:

"Your health is hardly better than mine."

"All outside?" cried Enjolras.

The insurgents sprang forward in a tumult, and, as they went out, Jean Valjean untied the rope that held the prisoner by the middle of the body, the knot of which was under the table. Then he motioned to him to get up.

Javert obeyed, with that indefinable smile into which the supremacy of enchained authority is condensed.

Jean Valjean took Javert by the martingale as you would take a beast of burden by a strap, and, drawing him after him, went out of the wine-shop slowly, for Javert, with his legs fettered, could take only very short steps.

Jean Valjean had the pistol in his hand.

They crossed thus the interior trapezium of the barricade. The insurgents, intent upon the imminent attack, were looking the other way.

Marius, alone, placed towards the left extremity of the wall, saw them pass. This group of the victim and the executioner borrowed a light from the sepulchral gleam which he had in his soul.

Jean Valjean, with some difficulty, bound as Javert was, but without letting go of him for a single instant, made him scale the little entrenchment on the Rue Mondétour.

When they had climbed over this wall, they found themselves alone in the little street. Nobody saw them now. The corner of the house hid them from the insurgent. The corpses carried out from the barricades made a terrible mound a few steps off.

They distinguished in the heap of dead, a livid face, a flowing head of hair, a wounded hand, and a woman's breast half naked. It was Eponine.

Javert looked aside at this dead body, and perfectly calm said in an undertone:

"It seems to me that I know that girl."

Then he turned towards Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean put the pistol under his arm, and fixed upon Javert a look which had no need of words to say: "Javert, it is I."

Javert answered:

"Take your revenge."

Jean Valjean took a knife out of his pocket and opened it.

"A *surin!*" exclaimed Javert. "You are right. That suits you better."

Jean Valjean cut the martingale which Javert had about his neck, then he cut the ropes which he had on his wrists, then, stooping down, he cut the cord which he had on his feet; and, rising, he said to him:

"You are free."

Javert was not easily astonished. Still, complete master as he was of himself, he could not escape an emotion. He stood aghast and motionless.

Jean Valjean continued:

"I don't expect to leave this place. Still, if by chance I should, I live, under the name of Fauchelevent, in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7."

Javert had the scowl of a tiger half opening a corner of his mouth, and he muttered between his teeth.

"Take care."

"Go," said Jean Valjean.

Javert resumed:

"You said Fauchelevent, Rue de l'Homme Armé?"

"Number Seven."

Javert repeated in an undertone: "Number Seven." He buttoned his coat, restored the military stiffness between his shoulders, turned half round, folded his arms supporting his chin with one hand, and walked off in the direction of the

markets. Jean Valjean followed him with his eyes. After a few steps, Javert turned back, and cried to Jean Valjean:

"You annoy me. Kill me rather."

Javert did not notice that his tone was more respectful towards Jean Valjean.

"Go away," said Jean Valjean.

Javert receded with slow steps. A moment afterwards, he turned the corner of the Rue des Prêcheurs.

When Javert was gone, Jean Valjean fired the pistol in the air.

Then he re-entered the barricade and said:

"It is done."

Meanwhile the death-agony of the barricade was approaching. The assailants had the numbers; the insurgents the position. They were on the top of a wall, and they shot down the soldiers at the muzzles of their muskets, as they stumbled over the dead and wounded and became entangled in the escarpment. This barricade, built as it was, and admirably supported, was really one of those positions in which a handful of men hold a legion in check. Still, constantly reinforced and increasing under the shower of balls, the attacking column inexorably approached, and now, little by little, step by step, but with certainty, the army hugged the barricade as the screw hugs the wine-press.

There was assault after assault. The horror continued to increase.

They fought breast to breast, foot to foot, with pistols, with sabres, with fists, at a distance, close at hand, from above, from below, from everyw^here, from the roofs of the house, from the windows of the wine-shop, from the gratings of the cellars into which some had slipped. They were one against sixty. The façade of Corinth, half demolished, was hideous. The window, riddled with grape, had lost glass and sash, and was now nothing but a shapeless hole, confusedly blocked with paving-stones. Bossuet was killed; Feuilly was killed; Courfeyrac was killed; Joly was killed; Combeferre, pierced by three bayonet thrusts in the breast, just as he was lifting a wounded soldier, had only time to look to heaven, and expired.

Marius, still fighting, was so hacked about with wounds, particularly about the head, that his countenance was lost in blood, and you would have said that he had his face covered with a red handkerchief.

Enjolras alone was untouched. When his weapon failed, he reached his hand to right or left, and an insurgent put whatever weapon he could in his grasp. Of four swords, one

more than Francis I at Marignan, he now had but one stump remaining.

A final assault was now attempted, and this assault succeeded. The mass, bristling with bayonets and hurled at a double-quick step, came on irresistible, and the dense battle-front of the attacking column appeared in the smoke at the top of the escarpment. This time it was finished. The group of insurgents who defended the centre fell back pell-mell.

Then grim love of life was roused in some. Covered by the aim of that forest of muskets, several were now unwilling to die. This is a moment when the instinct of self-preservation raises a howl, and the animal reappears in the man. They were pushed back to the high six-storey house which formed the rear of the redoubt. This house might be safety. This house was barricaded, and, as it were, walled in from top to bottom. Before the troops of the line would be in the interior of the redoubt, there was time for a door to open and shut, a flash was enough for that, and the door of this house, suddenly half opened and closed again immediately, to these despairing men was life. In the rear of this house there were streets, possible flight, space. They began to strike this door with the butts of their muskets and with kicks, calling, shouting, begging, wringing their hands. Nobody opened. From the window on the third storey the death's head looked at them.

But Enjolras and Marius, with seven or eight who had been rallied about them, sprang forward and protected them. Enjolras cried to the soldiers: "Keep back!" and an officer not obeying, Enjolras killed the officer. He was now in the little interior court of the redoubt, with his back to the house of Corinth, his sword in one hand, his carbine in the other, keeping the door of the wine-shop open while he barred it against the assailants. He cried to the despairing: "There is but one door open. This one." And, covering them with his body, alone facing a battalion, he made them pass in behind him. All rushed in. Enjolras, executing with his carbine, which he now used as a cane, what cudgel-players call *la rose couverte*, beat down the bayonets about him and before him, and entered last of all; and for an instant it was horrible, the soldiers struggling to get in, the insurgents to close the door. The door was closed with such violence that, in shutting into its frame, it exposed, cut off and adhering to the casement, the thumb and fingers of a soldier who had caught hold of it.

Marius remained without. A ball had broken his shoulder-blade; he felt that he was fainting, and that he was falling. At that moment, his eyes already closed, he experienced the shock of a vigorous hand seizing him, and his fainting fit, in which

he lost consciousness, left him hardly time for this thought, mingled with the last memory of Cosette: "I am taken prisoner. I shall be shot."

Enjolras, not seeing Marius among those who had taken refuge in the wine-shop, had the same idea. But they had reached that moment when each has only time to think of his own death. Enjolras fixed the bar of the door and bolted it, and fastened it with a double turn of lock and padlock, while they were beating furiously on the outside, the soldiers with the butts of their muskets, the sappers with their axes. The assailants were massed upon this door. The siege of the wine-shop was now beginning.

At last, mounting on each other's shoulders, helping themselves by the skeleton of the staircase, climbing up the walls, hanging to the ceiling, cutting to pieces, at the very edge of the hatchway, the last to resist, some twenty of the besiegers, soldiers, National Guards, Municipal Guards, pell-mell, most disfigured by wounds in the face in this terrible ascent, blinded with blood, furious, become savages, made an irruption into the room of the first storey. There was now but a single man there on his feet, Enjolras. Without cartridges, without a sword, he had now in his hand only the barrel of his carbine, the stock of which he had broken over the heads of those who were entering. He had put the billiard-table between the assailants and himself; he had retreated to the corner of the room, and there, with proud eye, haughty head, and that stump of a weapon in his grasp, he was still so formidable that a large space was left about him. A cry arose:

"This is the chief. As he has put himself there, it is a good place. Let him stay. Let us shoot him on the spot."

"Shoot me," said Enjolras.

And, throwing away the stump of his carbine, and folding his arms, he presented his breast.

Twelve men formed in platoon in the corner opposite Enjolras, and made their muskets ready in silence.

Then a sergeant cried: "Take aim!"

An officer intervened.

"Wait."

And addressing Enjolras:

"Do you wish your eyes bandaged?"

"No."

The sergeant was preparing to repeat the order: "Take aim!" when suddenly they heard a powerful voice cry out beside them:

"*Vive la République!* I belong to it."

It was Grantaire! For two days he had been asleep in

the wine cellar—drunk. They had left him alone in contempt.

The immense glare of the whole combat which he had missed, and in which he had not been, appeared in the flashing eye of the transfigured drunkard.

He repeated: "*Vive la République!*" crossed the room with a firm step, and took his place before the muskets beside Enjolras.

"Two at one shot," said he.

And turning towards Enjolras gently, he said to him:

"Will you permit it?"

Enjolras grasped his hand with a smile.

This smile was not finished when the report was heard.

Enjolras, pierced by eight balls, remained backed against the wall as if the balls had nailed him there. Only he bowed his head.

Grantaire, stricken down, fell at his feet.

CHAPTER XVII

Marius was in fact a prisoner. Prisoner of Jean Valjean.

The hand which had seized him from behind at the moment he was falling, and the grasp of which he had felt in losing consciousness, was the hand of Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean had taken no other part in the combat than to expose himself. Save for him, in that supreme phase of the death-struggle, nobody would have thought of the wounded. Thanks to him, everywhere present in the carnage like a providence, those who fell were taken up, carried into the basement-room, and their wounds dressed. In the intervals he repaired the barricade. But nothing which could resemble a blow, an attack, or even a personal defence came from his hands. He was silent, and gave aid. Moreover, he had only a few scratches. The balls refused him. If suicide were a part of what had occurred to him in coming to this sepulchre, in that respect he had not succeeded. But we doubt whether he had thought of suicide, an irreligious act.

Jean Valjean, in the thick of the combat, did not appear to see Marius; the fact is that he did not take his eyes from him. When a shot struck down Marius, Jean Valjean bounded with the agility of a tiger, dropped upon him as upon a prey, and carried him away.

The whirlwind of the attack at that instant concentrated so that it fell upon Enjolras and the door of the wine-shop that of a viddy saw Jean Valjean cross the unpaved field of the

barricade, holding the senseless Marius in his arms, and disappear behind the corner of the house of Corinth. They were fighting a few steps from him; by good luck all were fiercely intent upon a single point, the door of the wine-shop; but let one soldier, a single one, conceive the idea of turning the house, of attacking it in flank, and all was over.

Jean Valjean looked at the house in front of him, he looked at the barricade by the side of him, then he looked upon the ground, with the violence of the last extremity, in desperation, and as if he would have made a hole in it with his eyes.

Beneath his persistent look, something vaguely tangible in such an agony outlined itself and took form at his feet, as if there were a power in the eye to develop the thing desired. He perceived, a few steps from him, at the foot of the little wall so pitilessly watched and guarded on the outside, under some fallen paving-stones which partly hid it, an iron grating laid flat and level with the ground. This grating, made of strong transverse bars, was about two feet square. The stone frame which held it had been torn up, and it was as it were unset. Through the bars a glimpse could be caught of an obscure opening, something like the flue of a chimney or the main of a cistern. Jean Valjean sprang forward. His old science of escape mounted to his brain like a flash. To remove the stones, to lift the grating, to load Marius, who was as inert as a dead body, upon his shoulders, to descend, with that burden upon his back, by the aid of his elbows and knees, into this kind of well, fortunately not very deep, to let fall over his head, the heavy iron trap-door upon which the stones were shaken back again, to find a foothold upon a flagged surface ten feet below the ground, this was executed, like what is done in delirium, with the strength of a giant and the rapidity of an eagle; it required but very few moments.

Jean Valjean found himself, with Marius still senseless, in a sort of long underground passage.

There, deep peace, absolute silence, night.

The transition was marvellous. From the very centre of the city, Jean Valjean had gone out of the city, and, in the twinkling of an eye, the time of lifting a cover and closing it again, he had passed from broad day to complete obscurity, from noon to midnight, from uproar to silence, from the whirl of the thunder to the stagnation of the tomb, and, by a mutation much more prodigious still than that of the Rue Polonceau, from the most extreme peril to the most absolute security. Beyond, the opaqueness was massive; to penetrate it appeared horrible; and to enter it seemed like being engulfed. He could, however, force his way into that wall of mist, and he

must do it. He must even hasten. Jean Valjean thought that that grating, noticed by him under the paving-stones, might also be noticed by the soldiers, and that all depended upon that chance. They also could descend into the well and explore it. There was not a minute to be lost. He had laid Marius upon the ground, he gathered him up, this is again the right word, replaced him upon his shoulders, and began his journey. He resolutely entered that obscurity.

A little beyond an affluent, which was probably the branching of the Madeleine, he stopped. He was very tired. A large air-hole, probably the vista on the Rue d'Anjou, produced an almost vivid light. Jean Valjean, with the gentleness of movement of a brother for his wounded brother, laid Marius upon the side bank of the sewer. Marius's bloody face appeared, under the white gleam from the air-hole, as if at the bottom of a tomb. His eyes were closed, his hair adhered to his temples like brushes dried in red paint, his hands dropped down lifeless, his limbs were cold, there was coagulated blood at the corners of his mouth. A clot of blood had gathered in the tie of his cravat; his shirt was bedded in the wounds, the cloth of his coat chafed the gaping gashes in the living flesh. Jean Valjean, removing the garments with the ends of his fingers, laid his hand upon his breast; the heart still beat. Jean Valjean tore up his shirt, bandaged the wounds as well as he could, and staunched the flowing blood; then, bending in this twilight over Marius, who was still unconscious and almost lifeless, he looked at him with an inexpressible hatred.

In opening Marius's clothes, he had found two things in his pockets, the bread which had been forgotten there since the day previous, and Marius's pocket-book. He ate the bread and opened the pocket-book. On the first page he found the three lines written by Marius. They will be remembered :

"My name is Marius Pontmercy. Carry my corpse to my grandfather's, M. Gillenormand, Rue des Filles du Calvaire, No. 6, in the Marais."

By the light of the air-hole, Jean Valjean read these three lines, and stopped a moment as if absorbed in himself, repeating in an undertone: "Rue des Filles du Calvaire, No. 6, Monsieur Gillenormand." He replaced the pocket-book in Marius's pocket. He had eaten, strength had returned to him: he took Marius on his back again, laid his head carefully upon his right shoulder, and began to descend the sewer.

He felt that he was entering the water, and that he had under his feet, pavement no longer, but mud. But in proportion as he advanced, his feet sank in. He very soon had

the mire half-knee deep, and water above his knees. He walked on, holding Marius with both arms as high above the water as he could. The mud now came up to his knees, and the water to his waist. He could no longer turn back. He sank in deeper and deeper. This mire, dense enough for one man's weight, evidently could not bear two. Marius and Jean Valjean would have a chance of escape separately. Jean Valjean continued to advance, supporting this dying man, who was perhaps a corpse.

The water came up to his armpits; he felt that he was foundering; it was with difficulty that he could move in the depth of mire in which he was. The density, which was the support, was also the obstacle. He still held Marius up, and, with an unparalleled outlay of strength, he advanced; but he sank deeper. He now had only his head out of the water, and his arms supporting Marius. There is, in the old pictures of the Deluge, a mother doing thus with her child.

He sank still deeper, he threw his face back to escape the water, and to be able to breathe; he who should have seen him in this obscurity would have thought he saw a mask floating upon the darkness; he dimly perceived Marius's drooping head and livid face above him; he made a desperate effort, and thrust his foot forward; his foot struck something solid: a support. It was time.

He rose and writhed and rooted himself upon this support with a sort of fury. It produced the effect upon him of the first step of a staircase reascending towards life.

He rose, shivering, chilled, infected, bending beneath this dying man, whom he was dragging on, all dripping with slime, his soul filled with a strange light.

He walked with desperation, almost with rapidity, for a hundred paces, without raising his head, almost without breathing, and suddenly struck against the wall. He had reached an angle of the sewer, and, arriving at the turn with his head down, he had encountered the wall. He raised his eyes, and at the extremity of the passage, down there before him, far, very far away, he perceived a light. This time, it was not the terrible light; it was the good and white light. It was the light of day.

Jean Valjean reached the outlet.

There he stopped.

It was indeed the outlet, but it did not let him out.

The arch was closed by a strong grating, and the grating, which, according to all appearance, rarely turned upon its rusty hinges, was held in its stone frame by a stout lock, which, red with rust, seemed an enormous brick. He could

see the keyhole, and the strong bolt deeply plunged into the iron staple. The lock was plainly a double-lock. It was one of those Bastille locks of which the old Paris was so lavish.

Beyond the grating, the open air, the river, the daylight, the beach, very narrow, but sufficient to get away. The distant *quais*, Paris, that gulf in which one is so easily lost, the wide horizon, liberty. He distinguished at his right, below him, the Pont d'Iéna, and at his left, above, the Pont des Invalides; the spot would have been propitious for awaiting night and escaping. It was one of the most solitary points in Paris; the beach which fronts on the Gros Caillou. The flies came in and went out through the bars of the grating.

Jean Valjean laid Marius along the wall on the dry part of the floor, then walked to the grating and clenched the bars with both hands; the shaking was frenzied, the shock nothing. The grating did not stir. Jean Valjean seized the bars one after another, hoping to be able to tear out the least solid one, and to make a lever of it to lift the door or break the lock. Not a bar yielded. A tiger's teeth are not more solid in their sockets. No lever; no possible purchase. The obstacle was invincible. No means of opening the door.

Must he then perish there? He turned his back to the grating, and dropped upon the pavement, rather prostrate than sitting, beside the yet motionless Marius, and his head sank between his knees. No exit. This was the last drop of anguish.

In the midst of this annihilation, a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a voice which spoke low, said to him:

"Go halves."

Somebody in that darkness? Nothing is so like a dream as despair; Jean Valjean thought he was dreaming. He had heard no steps. Was it possible? He raised his eyes.

A man was before him.

This man was dressed in a blouse; he was barefooted; he held his shoes in his left hand; he had evidently taken them off to be able to reach Jean Valjean without being heard.

Jean Valjean had not a moment's hesitation. Unforeseen as was the encounter, this man was known to him. This man was Thenardier.

There was a moment of delay.

Thenardier, lifting his right hand to the height of his forehead, shaded his eyes with it, then brought his brows together while he winked his eyes, which, with a slight pursing of the mouth, characterises the sagacious attention of a man who is seeking to recognise another. He did not succeed. Jean Valjean, we have just said, turned his back to the light, and

was moreover so disfigured, so muddy and so blood-stained, that in full noon he would have been unrecognisable. On the other hand, with the light from the grating shining in his face, a cellar light, it is true, livid, but precise in its lividness, Thenardier, as the energetic trite metaphor expresses it, struck Jean Valjean at once. This inequality of conditions was enough to insure Jean Valjean some advantage in this mysterious duel which was about to open between the two conditions and the two men. The encounter took place between Jean Valjean veiled and Thenardier unmasked.

Jean Valjean perceived immediately that Thenardier did not recognise him.

They gazed at each other for a moment in this penumbra, as if they were taking each other's measure. Thenardier was first to break the silence.

"How are you going to manage to get out?"

Jean Valjean did not answer.

Thenardier continued:

"Impossible to pick the lock. Still you must get away from here."

"That is true," said Jean Valjean.

"Well, go halves."

"What do you mean?"

"You have killed the man; very well. For my part, I have the key."

Thenardier pointed to Marius. He went on:

"I don't know you, but I would like to help you. You must be a friend."

Jean Valjean began to understand. Thenardier took him for an assassin.

Thenardier resumed:

"Listen, comrade. You haven't killed that man without looking to what he had in his pockets. Give me my half. I will open the door for you."

And, drawing a big key half out from under his blouse, which was full of holes, he added:

"Would you like to see how the key of the fields is made? There it is."

Jean Valjean "remained stupid"—the expression is the elder Corneille's—so far as to doubt whether what he saw was real. It was Providence appearing in a guise of horror, and the good angel springing out of the ground under the form of Thenardier.

Thenardier plunged his fist into a huge pocket hidden under his blouse, pulled out a rope, and handed it to Jean Valjean.

"Here," said he, "I'll give you the rope to boot."

"A rope, what for?"

"You want a stone, too, but you'll find one outside. There is a heap of rubbish there."

"A stone, what for?"

"Fool, as you are going to throw the *pantré* into the river, you want a stone and a rope; without them it would float on the water."

Jean Valjean took the rope. Everybody has accepted things thus mechanically.

Thenardier snapped his fingers as over the arrival of a sudden idea:

"Ah, now, comrade, how did you manage to get out of the quagmire yonder? I haven't dared to risk myself there. Pugh! you don't smell good."

After a pause, he added:

"I ask you questions, but you are right in not answering them. This is an apprenticeship for the examining judge's cursed quarter of an hour. And then by not speaking at all you run no risk of speaking too loud. It is all the same, because I don't see your face, and because I don't know your name, you would do wrong to suppose that I don't know who you are and what you want. Understood. You have smashed this gentleman a little; now you want to squeeze him somewhere. You need the river, the great hide-folly. I am going to get you out of the scrape. To help a good fellow in trouble that puts my boots on."

While approving Jean Valjean for keeping silence, he was evidently seeking to make him speak. He pushed his shoulders, so as to endeavour to see his side-face, and exclaimed, without however rising above the moderate tone in which he kept his voice:

"Speaking of the quagmire, you are a proud animal. Why didn't you throw the man in there?"

Jean Valjean preserved silence.

Thenardier resumed, raising the rag which served him as a cravat up to his Adam's apple, a gesture which completes the air of sagacity of a serious man:

"Indeed, perhaps you have acted prudently. The workmen when they come to-morrow to stop the hole, would certainly have found the *pantinois* forgotten there, and they would have been able, thread by thread, straw by straw, to *pincer* the trace, and to reach you. Something has passed through the sewer. Who? Where did he come out? Did anybody see him come out? The police has plenty of brains. The sewer is treacherous and informs against you. Such a

discovery is a rarity, it attracts attention, few people use the sewer in their business, while the river is at everybody's service. The river is the true grave. At the month's end they fish you up the man at the nets of Saint Cloud. Well, what does that amount to? It is a carcase, indeed! Who killed this man? Paris. And justice don't even inquire into it. You have done right."

The more loquacious Thenardier was, the more dumb was Jean Valjean. Thenardier pushed his shoulder anew.

"Now, let us finish the business. Let us divide. You have seen my key, show me your money."

Thenardier was haggard, tawny, equivocal, a little threatening, nevertheless friendly.

There was one strange circumstance; Thenardier's manner was not natural; he did not appear entirely at his ease; while he did not affect an air of misery, he talked low; from time to time he laid his finger on his mouth, and muttered: "Hush!" It was difficult to guess why. There was nobody there but them. Jean Valjean thought that some other bandits were hidden in some recess not far off, and that Thenardier did not care to share with them.

Thenardier resumed:

"Let us finish. How much did the *pantré* have in his deeps?"

Jean Valjean felt in his pockets.

It was, as will be remembered, his custom to have money about him. The gloomy life of expedients to which he was condemned made this a law to him. This time, however, he was caught unprovided. On putting on his National Guard's uniform, the evening before, he had forgotten, gloomily absorbed as he was, to take his pocket-book with him. He had only some coins in his waistcoat-pocket. He turned out his pocket all soaked with filth, and displayed upon the curb of the sewer a louis d'or, two five-franc pieces, and five or six big sous.

Thenardier thrust out his under lip with a significant twist of the neck.

"You didn't kill him very dear," said he.

He began to handle, in all familiarity, the pockets of Jean Valjean and Marius. Jean Valjean, principally concerned in keeping his back to the light, did not interfere with him. While he was feeling in Marius's coat, Thenardier, with the dexterity of a juggler, found means, without attracting Jean Valjean's attention, to tear off a strip, which he hid under his blouse, probably thinking that this scrap of cloth might assist him afterwards to identify the assassinated man and the

assassin. He found, however, nothing more than the thirty francs.

"It is true," said he, "both together you have no more than that."

And, forgetting his words, *go halves*, he took the whole.

He hesitated a little before the big sous. Upon reflection he took them also, mumbling:

"No matter! this is to *suriner* people too cheap."

This said, he took the key from under his blouse anew.

"Now, friend, you must go out. This is like the fair, you pay on going out. You have paid, go out."

And he began to laugh.

That he had, in extending to an unknown man the help of this key, and in causing another man than himself to go out by this door, the pure and disinterested intention of saving an assassin is something which it is permissible to doubt.

Thenardier helped Jean Valjean to replace Marius upon his shoulders; then he went towards the grating upon the points of his bare feet, beckoning to Jean Valjean to follow him; he looked outside, laid his finger on his mouth, and stood a few seconds as if in suspense; the inspection over, he put the key into the lock. The bolt slid and the door turned. There was neither snapping nor grinding. It was done very quietly. It was plain that this grating and its hinges, oiled with care, were opened oftener than would have been guessed. This quiet was ominous; you felt in it the furtive goings and comings, the silent entrances and exits of the men of the night, and the wolf-like tread of crime. The sewer was evidently in complicity with some mysterious band. This taciturn grating was a receiver.

Thenardier half opened the door, left just a passage for Jean Valjean, closed the grating again, turned the key twice in the lock and plunged back into the obscurity, without making more noise than a breath. He seemed to walk with the velvet paws of a tiger. A moment afterwards this hideous providence had entered again into the invisible.

Jean Valjean found himself outside. He let Marius slide down upon the beach.

It was the undecided and exquisite hour which says neither yes nor no. There was already night enough for one to be lost in it at a little distance, and still day enough for one to be recognised near at hand.

Jean Valjean could not but gaze at that vast clear shadow which was above him; pensive, he took in the majestic silence of the eternal heavens, a bath of ecstasy and prayer. Then, hastily, as if a feeling of duty came back to him, he bent over

Marius, and, dipping up some water in the hollow of his hand, he threw a few drops gently into his face. Marius's eyelids did not part; but his half-open mouth breathed.

Jean Valjean was plunging his hand into the river again, when suddenly he felt an indescribable uneasiness, such as we feel when we have somebody behind us, without seeing him. He turned round.

A man of tall stature, wrapped in a long overcoat, with folded arms, and holding in his right hand a club, the leaden knob of which could be seen, stood erect a few steps in the rear of Jean Valjean, who was stooping over Marius.

It was, with the aid of the shadow, a sort of apparition. A simple man would have been afraid on account of the twilight, and a reflective man on account of the club.

Jean Valjean recognised Javert.

Javert, after his unhopèd-for departure from the barricade, had gone to the prefecture of police, had given an account verbally to the prefect in person in a short audience, had then immediately returned to his duty, which implied a certain surveillance of the shore on the right bank of the Champs Elysées, which for some time had excited the attention of the police. There he had seen Thenardier, and had followed him. The bandit had recognised him and retired to the sewer.

It is understood also that the opening of that grating so obligingly before Jean Valjean was a piece of shrewdness on the part of Thenardier. Thenardier felt that Javert was still there; the man who is watched has a scent which does not deceive him; a bone must be thrown to this hound. An assassin, what a godsend! It was the scapegoat, which must never be refused. Thenardier, by putting Jean Valjean out in his place, gave a victim to the police, threw them off his own track, caused himself to be forgotten in a larger matter, rewarded Javert for his delay, which always flatters a spy, gained thirty francs, and counted surely, as for himself, upon escaping by the aid of this diversion.

Javert did not recognise Jean Valjean, who, as we have said, no longer resembled himself. He did not unfold his arms, he secured his club in his grasp by an imperceptible movement, and said in a quick and calm voice:

"Who are you?"

"I."

"What you?"

"Jean Valjean."

Javert put the club between his teeth, bent his knees, inclined his body, laid his two powerful hands upon Jean Valjean's shoulders, which they clamped like two vices,

examined him, and recognised him. Their faces almost touched. Javert's look was terrible.

Jean Valjean stood inert under the grasp of Javert like a lion who should submit to the claw of a lynx.

"Inspector Javert," said he, "you have got me. Besides, since this morning, I have considered myself your prisoner. I did not give you my address to try to escape you. Take me. Only grant me one thing."

Javert seemed not to hear. He rested his fixed eye upon Jean Valjean. His rising chin pushed his lips towards his nose, a sign of savage reverie. At last he let go of Jean Valjean, rose up as straight as a stick, took his club firmly in his grasp, and, as if in a dream, murmured rather than pronounced this question:

"What are you doing here? and who is this man?"

Jean Valjean answered, and the sound of his voice appeared to awaken Javert:

"It is precisely of him that I wished to speak. Dispose of me as you please; but help me first to carry him home. I only ask that of you."

Javert's face contracted, as it happened to him whenever anybody seemed to consider him capable of a concession. Still he did not say no.

He stooped down again, took a handkerchief from his pocket, which he dipped in the water, and wiped Marius's bloodstained forehead.

"This man was in the barricade," said he in an undertone, and as if speaking to himself. "This is he whom they called Marius."

Jean Valjean felt in Marius's coat, took out the pocket-book, opened it at the page pencilled by Marius, and handed it to Javert.

There was still enough light floating in the air to enable one to read. Javert, moreover, had in his eye the feline phosphorescence of the birds of the night. He deciphered the few lines written by Marius, and muttered "Gillenormand, Rue des Filles du Calvaire, No. 6."

A fiacre was in the near distance. Javert called "Driver!" He kept Marius's pocket-book.

A moment later, the carriage, descending by the slope of the watering-place, was on the beach. Marius was laid upon the back seat, and Javert sat down by the side of Jean Valjean on the front seat.

When the door was shut, the fiacre moved rapidly off, going up the *quais* in the direction of the Bastille.

They left the *quais* and entered the streets. The driver, a

black silhouette upon his box, whipped up his bony horses. Icy silence in the coach. Marius, motionless, his body braced in the corner of the carriage, his head dropping upon his breast, his arms hanging, his legs rigid, appeared to await nothing now but a coffin; Jean Valjean seemed made of shadow, and Javert of stone; and in that carriage full of night, the interior of which, whenever it passed before a lamp, appeared to turn lividly pale, as if from an intermittent flash, chance grouped together, and seemed dismally to confront, the three tragic immobilities, the corpse, the spectre and the statue.

At every jolt over the pavement a drop of blood fell from Marius's hair.

It was after nightfall when the fiacre arrived at No. 6, in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire.

Everybody in the house was asleep. People go to bed early in the Marais, especially on days of *émeute*. That good old quartier, startled by the Revolution, takes refuge in slumber, as children, when they hear Bugaboo coming, hide their heads very quickly under their coverlets.

Javert called out to the porter in the tone which befits the Government, in presence of the porter of a factious man.

"Somebody whose name is Gillenormand?"

"It is here. What do you want with him?"

"His son is brought home."

"His son?" said the porter with amazement.

"He is dead."

Javert continued:

"He has been to the barricade, and here he is."

"To the barricade!" exclaimed the porter.

"He has got himself killed. Go and wake his father."

The porter merely woke Aunt Gillenormand. As to the grandfather, they let him sleep, thinking that he would know it soon enough at all events.

They carried Marius up to the first storey, without anybody, moreover, perceiving it in the other portions of the house, and they laid him on an old couch in M. Gillenormand's ante-chamber; and then Jean Valjean felt Javert touch him on the shoulder. He understood, and went downstairs, having behind him Javert's following steps.

The porter saw them depart as he had seen them arrive, with drowsy dismay.

They got into the fiacre again, and the driver mounted upon his box.

"Inspector Javert," said Jean Valjean, "grant me one thing more."

"What?" asked Javert roughly.

"Let me go home a moment. Then you shall do with me what you will."

Javert remained silent for a few seconds, his chin drawn back into the collar of his overcoat, then he let down the window in front.

"Driver," said he, "Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7."

They did not open their mouths again for the whole distance.

At the entrance of the Rue de l'Homme Armé the fiacre stopped, this street being too narrow for carriages to enter. Javert and Jean Valjean got out.

Jean Valjean thought that Javert's intention was to take him on foot to the post of the Blancs-Manteaux or to the post of the Archives which are quite nearby.

They entered the street. It was, as usual, empty. Javert followed Jean Valjean. They reached No. 7. Jean Valjean rapped. The door opened.

"Very well," said Javert. "Go up."

He added with a strange expression and as if he were making an effort in speaking in such a way:

"I will wait here for you."

Jean Valjean looked at Javert. This manner of proceeding was little in accordance with Javert's habits. Still, that Javert should now have a sort of haughty confidence in him, the confidence of the cat which grants the mouse the liberty of the length of her claw, resolved as Jean Valjean was to deliver himself up and make an end of it, could not surprise him very much. He opened the door, went into the house, cried to the porter who was in bed and who had drawn the cord without getting up: "It is I!" and mounted the stairs.

On reaching the first storey he paused. All painful paths have their halting-places. The window on the landing, which was a sliding window, was open. As in many old houses, the stairway admitted the light, and had a view upon the street. The street lamp, which stood exactly opposite, threw some rays upon the stairs, which produced an economy in light.

Jean Valjean, either to take breath or mechanically, looked out of this window. He leaned over the street. It is short, and the lamp lighted it from one end to the other. Jean Valjean was bewildered with amazement; there was nobody there.

Javert was gone. Let us follow him.

He walked away with his head down, for the first time in his life, and, for the first time in his life as well, with his hands behind his back. His whole person, slow and gloomy, bore the impress of anxiety.

He took the shortest route towards the Seine, reached the

Quai des Ormes, went along the *quai*, passed the Grève, and stopped, at a little distance from the post of the Place du Châtelet, at the corner of the Pont Notre Dame.

Javert leaned both elbows on the parapet, with his chin in his hands, and while his fingers were clenched mechanically in the thickest of his whiskers, he reflected.

There had been a new thing, a revolution, a catastrophe in the depths of his being; and there was matter for self-examination.

One thing had astonished him, that Jean Valjean had spared him, and one thing had petrified him, that he, Javert, had spared Jean Valjean. Other acts, which he remembered and which he had hitherto treated as lies and follies, returned to him now as realities. M. Madeleine reappeared behind Jean Valjean, and the two figures overlaid each other so as to make but one, which was venerable. Javert felt that something horrible was penetrating his soul, admiration for a convict. Respect for a galley-slave, can that be possible? He shuddered at it, yet could not shake it off. It was useless to struggle, he was reduced to confess before his own inner tribunal the sublimity of this wretch. That was hateful. He saw what he revolted at seeing. He felt that he was emptied, useless, broken off from his past life, destitute, dissolved. Authority was dead in him. He had no further reason for existence.

Unnatural state, if ever there was one. There were only two ways to get out of it. One, to go resolutely to Jean Valjean, and to return the man of the galleys to the dungeon. The other——

The darkness was complete. It was the sepulchral moment which follows midnight. A ceiling of clouds concealed the stars. The silhouettes of the bridges were distorted in the mist, one behind the other. The rains had swelled the river.

Javert bent his head and looked. All was black. He remained for some minutes motionless, gazing into that opening of darkness; he contemplated the invisible with a fixedness which resembled attention. The water gurgled. Suddenly he took off his hat and laid it on the edge of the *quai*. A moment afterwards, a tall and black form, which from the distance some belated passer might have taken for a phantom, appeared standing on the parapet, bent towards the Seine, then sprang up, and fell straight into the darkness; there was a dull splash; and the shadow alone was in the secret of the convulsions of that obscure form which had disappeared under the water.

CHAPTER XVIII

At the Gillenormands' Aunt Gillenormand went to and fro in terror, clasping her hands, and incapable of doing anything but to say: "My God, is it possible?" She added at intervals: "Everything will be covered with blood!" When the first horror was over, a certain philosophy of the situation dawned upon her mind, and expressed itself by this exclamation: "It must have turned out this way!" She did not attain to: "I always said just so!" which is customary on occasions of this kind.

The physician, who had been called in, seemed reflecting sadly. From time to time he shook his head, as if he were answering some question which he had put to himself internally. A bad sign for the patient, these mysterious dialogues of the physician with himself.

At the moment the doctor was wiping the face and touching the still closed eyelids lightly with his finger, a door opened at the rear end of the parlour, and a long, pale figure approached.

It was the grandfather. Surprised by the light which he saw at the crack of his door, he had got out of bed, and groped his way along.

He was on the threshold, one hand on the knob of the half-opened door, his head bent a little forward and shaking, his body wrapped in a white nightgown, straight and without folds like a shroud; he was astounded; and he had the appearance of a phantom who is looking into a tomb.

He perceived the bed, and on the mattress that bleeding young man, white with a waxy whiteness, his eyes closed, his mouth open, his lips pallid, naked to the waist, gashed everywhere with red wounds, motionless, brightly lighted. He murmured: "Marius!"

Then a sort of sepulchral transfiguration made this centenarian as straight as a young man.

"Monsieur," said he, "you are the doctor. Come, tell me one thing. He is dead, isn't he?"

The physician, in the height of anxiety, kept silence.

M. Gillenormand wrung his hands with a terrific burst of laughter.

"He is dead! he is dead! He has got killed at the barricades! in hatred of me! It is against me that he did this! Ah, the blood-drinker! This is the way he comes back to me! Misery of my life, he is dead!"

At this moment Marius slowly raised his lids, and his gaze, still veiled in the astonishment of lethargy, rested upon M. Gillenormand.

"Marius!" cried the old man. "Marius! my darling Marius! my child! my dear son! You are opening your eyes, you are looking at me, you are alive; thanks!"

And he fell fainting.

Marius was for a long time neither dead nor alive. He had for several weeks a fever, accompanied with delirium, and serious cerebral symptoms resulting rather from the concussion produced by the wounds in the head than from the wounds themselves.

Every day, and sometimes twice a day, a very well dressed gentleman with white hair, such was the description given by the porter, came to inquire after the wounded man, and left a large package of lint for the dressings.

At last, on the 7th of September, four months, to a day, after the sorrowful night when they had brought him home dying to his grandfather, the physician declared him out of danger. Convalescence began. Marius was, however, obliged still to remain for more than two months stretched on a long chair, on account of the accidents resulting from the fracture of the shoulder-blade. There is always a last wound like this which will not close, and which prolongs the dressings, to the great disgust of the patient.

However, this long sickness and this long convalescence saved him from pursuit. In France, there is no anger, even governmental, which six months does not extinguish. *Emeutes*, in the present state of society, are so much the fault of everybody that they are followed by a certain necessity of closing the eyes.

Let us add that the infamous Gisquet order, which enjoined physicians to inform against the wounded, having outraged public opinion, and not only public opinion, but the King first of all, the wounded were shielded and protected by this indignation; and, with the exception of those who had been taken prisoners in actual combat, the court-martials dared not disturb any. Marius was therefore left in peace.

At each new phase of improvement, which continued to grow more and more visible, the grandfather raved. He did a thousand mirthful things mechanically; he ran up and down stairs without knowing why. As for Marius, while he let them dress his wounds and care for him, he had one fixed idea: Cosette.

Since the fever and the delirium had left him, he had not uttered that name, and they might have supposed that he no

longer thought of it. He held his peace, precisely because his soul was in it.

He did not hide the obstacles from himself.

Let us emphasise one point here: he was not won over, and was little softened by all the solicitude and all the tenderness of his grandfather. In the first place, he was not in the secret of it all; then, in his sick man's reveries, still feverish perhaps, he distrusted this gentleness as a new and strange thing, the object of which was to subdue him. He remained cold. The grandfather expended his poor old smile for nothing. Marius said to himself it was well so long as he, Marius, did not speak and offered no resistance; but that, when the question of Cosette was raised, he would find another face, and his grandfather's real attitude would be unmasked. Then it would be harsh recrudescence of family questions, every sarcasm and every objection at once; Fauchelevent, fortune, poverty, misery, the stone at the neck, the future. Violent opposition; conclusion; refusal. Marius was bracing himself in advance.

One day M. Gillenormand, while his daughter was putting in order the vials and the cups upon the marble top of the bureau, bent over Marius and said to him in his most tender tone:

"Do you see, my darling Marius, in your place I would eat meat now rather than fish. A fried sole is excellent to begin a convalescence, but to put the sick man on his legs it takes a good cutlet."

Marius, nearly all whose strength had returned, gathered it together, sat up in bed, rested his clenched hands on the sheets, looked his grandfather in the face, assumed a terrible air, and said:

"This leads me to say something to you."

"What is it?"

"It is that I wish to marry."

"Foreseen," said the grandfather. And he burst out laughing.

"How foreseen?"

"Yes, foreseen. You shall have her, your lassie."

Marius, astounded, and overwhelmed by the dazzling burst of happiness, trembled in every limb.

M. Gillenormand continued:

"Yes, you shall have her, your handsome, pretty little girl. She comes every day in the shape of an old gentleman to inquire after you. Since you were wounded, she has passed her time in weeping and making lint. I have made inquiry. She lives in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7. Ah! you thought

that the old fellow was going to storm, to make a gruff voice, to cry No, and to lift his cane upon all this dawn. Not at all. Cosette, so be it; love, so be it; I ask nothing better. Monsieur, take the trouble to marry. Be happy, my dear child."

This said, the old man burst into sobs.

So it came about that Cosette and Marius saw each other again.

What the interview was we will not attempt to tell. There are things which we should not undertake to paint; the sun is of the number.

With Cosette and behind her had entered a man with white hair, grave, smiling nevertheless, but with a vague and poignant smile. This was "Monsieur Fauchelevent"; this was Jean Valjean.

Monsieur Fauchelevent, in Marius's room, stayed near the door, as if apart. He had under his arm a package similar in appearance to an octavo volume, wrapped in paper. The paper of the envelope was greenish, and seemed mouldy. Suddenly, M. Gillenormand, bowing, said, in a loud voice:

"Monsieur Trachevent——"

Father Gillenormand did not do this on purpose, but inattention to proper names was an aristocratic way he had.

"Monsieur Trachevent, I have the honour of asking of you for my grandson, Monsieur the Baron Marius Pontmercy, the hand of Mademoiselle."

Monsieur Trachevent bowed.

"It is done," said the grandfather. "Only," added he, suddenly darkening, "what a misfortune! This is what I am thinking of! More than half of what I have is in annuity: as long as I live, it's all well enough, but after my death, twenty years from now, ah! my poor children, you will not have a sou. Your beautiful white hands, Madame the Baroness, will do the devil the honour to pull him by the tail."

Here a grave and tranquil voice was heard, which said:

"Mademoiselle Euphrasie Fauchelevent has six hundred thousand francs."

It was Jean Valjean's voice.

He had not yet uttered a word, nobody seemed even to remember that he was there, and he stood erect and motionless behind all these happy people.

"Who is Mademoiselle Euphrasie?" asked the grandfather, startled.

"That is me," answered Cosette.

"Six hundred thousand francs!" resumed M. Gillenormand.

"Less fourteen or fifteen thousand francs, perhaps," said Jean Valjean.

And he laid on the table the package which had the appearance of a book.

Jean Valjean opened the package himself; it was a bundle of bank-notes. They ran through them, and they counted them. There were five hundred bills of a thousand francs, and a hundred and sixty-eight of five hundred. In all, five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs.

"That is a good book," said M. Gillenormand.

"Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!" murmured the aunt.

"This arranges things very well, does it not, Mademoiselle Gillenormand the elder?" resumed the grandfather. "This devil of a Marius, he has found you a grisette millionaire on the tree of dreams! Then trust in the love-making of young folks nowadays! Students and studentesses with six hundred thousand francs. Chérubin works better than Rothschild."

"Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!" repeated Mademoiselle Gillenormand in an undertone. "Five hundred and eighty-four! you might call it six hundred thousand, indeed!"

As for Marius and Cosette, they were looking at each other during this time; they paid little attention to this incident.

CHAPTER XIX

The enchantment, great as it was, did not efface other preoccupations from Marius's mind.

During the preparations for the marriage, and while waiting for the time fixed upon, he had some difficult and careful retrospective researches made.

He owed gratitude on several sides: he owed some on his father's account, he owed some on his own.

There was Thenardier; there was the unknown man who had brought him, Marius, to M. Gillenormand's.

Marius persisted in trying to find these two men, not intending to marry, to be happy, and to forget them, and fearing lest these debts of duty unpaid might cast a shadow over his life, so luminous henceforth. It was impossible for him to leave all these arrears unsettled behind him; and he wished, before entering joyously into the future, to have a quittance from the past.

That Thenardier was a scoundrel, took away nothing from this fact that he had saved Colonel Pontmercy on the field of Waterloo. Thenardier had been prowling around the battle-

ground, when he had discovered Pontmercy, badly injured and left for dead, beneath a pile of bodies. Pontmercy had asked for the other's name, and had never forgotten it. Thenardier was a bandit to everybody except Marius.

And Marius, ignorant of the real scene of the battlefield of Waterloo, did not know this peculiarity, that his father was, with reference to Thenardier, in this singular situation, that he owed his life to him without owing him any thanks.

None of the various agents whom Marius employed succeeded in finding Thenardier's track. Effacement seemed complete on that side. The Thenardiess had died in prison pending the examination on the charge. Thenardier and his daughter Azelma, the two who alone remained of that woeful group, had plunged back into the shadow. As for the other, as for the unknown man who had saved Marius, the researches at first had some result, then stopped short. They succeeded in finding the fiacre which had brought Marius to the Rue des Filles due Calvaire on the evening of the 6th of June. The driver declared that on the 6th of June, by order of a police officer, he had been "stationed", from three o'clock in the afternoon until night, on the *quai* of the Champs Elysées, above the outlet of the Grand Sewer; that, about nine o'clock in the evening, the grating of the sewer, which overlooks the river beach, was opened; that a man came out, carrying another man on his shoulders, who seemed to be dead; that the officer, who was watching at that point, arrested the living man, and seized the dead man; that, on the order of the officer, he, the driver, received "all those people" into the fiacre; that they went first to the Rue des Filles du Calvaire; that they left the dead man there; that the dead man was Monsieur Marius, and that he, the driver, recognised him plainly, although he was alive "this time"; that they then got into his carriage again; that he whipped up his horses; that within a few steps of the door of the Archives, he had been called to stop: that there, in the street, he had been paid and left, and that the officer took away the other man; that he knew nothing more; that the night was very dark.

Marius recollected nothing. He merely remembered having been seized from behind by a vigorous hand at the moment he fell backwards into the barricades, then all became a blank to him. He had recovered consciousness only at M. Gillenormand's.

He was lost in conjectures.

He could not doubt his own identity. How did it come about, however, that, falling into the Rue de la Chanvrerie, he had been picked up by the police officer on the banks of the

Seine, near the Pont des Invalides? Somebody had carried him from the quartier of the markets to the Champs Elysées. And how? By the sewer. Unparalleled devotion!

Of this man, who was his saviour, nothing; no trace; not the least indication.

Marius, although compelled to great reserve in this respect, pushed his researches as far as the prefecture of police. The prefecture knew less than the driver of the fiacre. They had no knowledge of any arrest made on the 6th of June at the grating of the Grand Sewer; they had received no officer's report upon that fact, which, at the prefecture, was regarded as a fable. They attributed the invention of this fable to the driver. A driver who wants drink-money is capable of anything, even of imagination. The thing was certain, for all that, and Marius could not doubt it, unless by doubting his own identity, as we have just said.

In the hope of deriving aid in his researches from them, Marius had had preserved the bloody clothes which he wore when he was brought back to his grandfather's. On examining the coat, it was noticed that one skirt was oddly torn. A piece was missing.

But the researches had now perforce to be interrupted.

The night of the 16th of February, 1833, was a blessed night. Above its shade the heavens were opened. It was the wedding of Marius and Cosette.

Cosette, at the *mairie* and in the church, was brilliant and touching. She wore her dress of Binche guipure over a skirt of white taffetas, a veil of English point, a necklace of fine pearls, a crown of orange flowers; all this was white, and in this whiteness she was radiant. It was an exquisite candour, dilating and transfiguring itself into luminousness. One would have said she was a virgin in process of becoming a goddess.

In the evening a banquet was prepared in the dining-room. A few moments before they took their seats at the table, Cosette came, as if from a sudden impulse, and made Jean Valjean a low courtesy, spreading out her bridal dress with both hands, and with a tenderly frolicsome look, she asked him:

"Father, are you pleased?"

"Yes," said Valjean, "I am pleased."

"Well, then laugh."

Jean Valjean began to laugh.

The evening was lively, gay, delightful. The sovereign good-humour of the grandfather gave the key-note to the whole festival, and everybody regulated himself by this almost cen-

tenarian cordiality. They danced a little, they laughed much; it was a good childlike wedding.

There was a tumult, then silence.

The bride and groom disappeared.

A little after midnight the Gillenormand house became a temple.

Here we stop: Upon the threshold of wedding nights stands an angel smiling, his finger on his lip.

Jean Valjean returned home. He lighted his candle and went upstairs. The apartment was empty. Toussaint herself was no longer there. Jean Valjean's step made more noise than usual in the rooms. All the closets were open. He went into Cosette's room. There were no sheets on the bed. The pillow, without a pillow-case and without laces, was laid upon the coverlets folded at the foot of the mattress, of which the ticking was to be seen and on which nobody should sleep henceforth. All the little feminine objects to which Cosette clung had been carried away; there remained only the heavy furniture and the four walls. Toussaint's bed was also stripped. A single bed was made and seemed waiting for somebody—that was Jean Valjean's.

Then he found himself again in his own room, and he put his candle on a table.

He approached his bed, and his eyes fell, was it by chance? was it with intention? upon the little trunk which never left him. On the 4th of June, on arriving in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, he had placed it upon a candle-stand at the head of his bed. He went to this stand with a sort of vivacity, took a key from his pocket, and opened the valise.

He took out slowly the garments in which, ten years before, Cosette had left Montfermeil; first the little dress, then the black scarf, then the great heavy child's shoes which Cosette could have almost put on still, so small a foot she had, then the bodice of very thick fustian, then the knit-skirt, then the apron with pockets, then the woollen stockings. As he took them out of the valise, he laid them on the bed. He was thinking. He remembered. It was in winter, a very cold December, she shivered half-naked in rags, her poor little feet all red in her wooden shoes. He, Jean Valjean, he had taken her away from those rags to clothe her in this mourning garb. The mother must have been pleased in her tomb to see her daughter wear mourning for her, and especially to see that she was clad, and that she was warm. He arranged the little things upon the bed, the scarf next the skirt, the stockings beside the shoes, the bodice beside the dress, and he looked at them one after another. She was no higher than that, she

had her great doll in her arms, she laughed; they walked holding each other by the hand, she had nobody but him in the world.

Then his venerable white head fell upon the bed, this old stoical heart broke, his face was swallowed up, so to speak, in Cosette's garments, and anybody who had passed along the staircase at that moment would have heard fearful sobs.

CHAPTER XX

The day after a wedding is solitary. The privacy of the happy is respected. And thus their slumber is a little belated. The tumult of visits and felicitations does not commence until later. On the morning of the 17th of February it was a little after noon, when Jean Valjean called at the Rue des Filles du Calvaire. He was very pale. His eyes were hollow, and so sunken in their sockets from want of sleep that they could hardly be seen.

There was a noise at the door, he raised his eyes.

Marius entered, his head erect, his mouth smiling, an indescribable light upon his face, his forehead radiant, his eye triumphant. He also had not slept.

"It is you, father!" exclaimed he on perceiving Jean Valjean. "But you come too early. It is only half an hour after noon yet. Cosette is asleep."

That word Father, said to M. Fauchelevent by Marius, signified Supreme felicity.

He continued; words overflowed from him, which is characteristic of these divine paroxysms of joy:

"How glad I am to see you! We have absolutely decided to be very happy. And you are part of our happiness, do you understand, father? Come now, you breakfast with us to-day?"

"Monsieur," said Jean Valjean, "I have one thing to tell you. I am an old convict."

The limit of perceptible acute sounds may be passed quite as easily for the mind as for the ear. These words, "I am an old convict," coming from M. Fauchelevent's mouth and entering Marius's ear, went beyond the possible. Marius stammered out:

"What does this mean?"

"It means," answered Jean Valjean, "that I have been in the galleys."

"You drive me mad!" exclaimed Marius in dismay.

"Monsieur Pontmercy," said Jean Valjean, "I was nineteen years in the galleys. For robbery. Then I was sentenced for life. For robbery. For a second offence. At this hour I am in breach of ban."

It was useless for Marius to recoil before the reality, to refuse the fact, to resist the evidence; he was compelled to yield. He caught a glimpse in the future of a hideous destiny for himself.

"Tell all, tell all!" cried he. "You are Cosette's father!"

Jean Valjean raised his head with such a majesty of attitude that he seemed to rise to the ceiling.

"It is necessary that you believe me in this, Monsieur; although the oath of such as I be not received. I the father of Cosette! before God, no. Monsieur Baron Pontmercy, I am a peasant of Faverolles. I earned my living by pruning trees. My name is not Fauchelevent, my name is Jean Valjean. I am nothing to Cosette. Compose yourself."

"I believe you," said Marius.

Jean Valjean inclined his head as if making oath, and continued:

"What am I to Cosette? a passer. Ten years ago, I did not know that she existed. I love her, it is true. To-day Cosette leaves my life; our two roads separate. As for the six hundred thousand francs, you have not spoken of them to me, but I anticipate your thought; that is a trust. How did this trust come into my hands? What matters it? I make over the trust. Nothing more can be asked of me. I complete the restitution by telling my real name. This again concerns me. I desire, myself, that you should know who I am."

He ceased again; Marius had risen with a shudder. Jean Valjean resumed:

"What say you?"

Marius's silence answered.

Jean Valjean continued:

"You see very well that I am right in not keeping quiet. Go on, be happy, be in heaven, be an angel of an angel, be in the sunshine, and be contented with it, and do not trouble yourself about the way which a poor condemned man takes to open his heart and do his duty; you have a wretched man before you, Monsieur."

Marius crossed the parlour slowly, and when he was near Jean Valjean, extended him his hand.

But Marius had to take that hand which did not offer itself; Jean Valjean was passive, and it seemed to Marius that he was grasping a hand of marble.

"My grandfather has friends," said Marius, "I will procure your pardon."

"It is useless," answered Jean Valjean. "They think me dead, that is enough. The dead are not subjected to surveillance. They are supposed to moulder tranquilly. Death is the same thing as pardon."

And, disengaging his hand, which Marius held, he added with a sort of inexorable dignity:

"It is all nearly finished. There is one thing left——"

"What?"

Jean Valjean had as it were a supreme hesitation, and, voiceless, almost breathless, he faltered out rather than said:

"Now that you know, do you think, Monsieur, you who are the master, that I ought not to see Cosette again?"

"I think that would be best," answered Marius coldly.

"I shall not see her again," murmured Jean Valjean.

And he walked towards the door.

Marius bowed to Jean Valjean, Happiness conducted Despair to the door, and these two men separated.

CHAPTER XXI

During the last months of the spring and the first months of the summer of 1833, the scattered wayfarers in the Marais, the storekeepers, the idlers upon the doorstep, noticed an old man neatly dressed in black, every day, about the same hour, at nightfall, come out of the Rue de l'Homme Armé, in the direction of the Rue Sainte Croix de la Bretonnerie, pass by the Blancs Manteaux to the Rue Culture Sainte Catherine, and, reaching the Rue de l'Echarpe, turn to the left, and enter the Rue Saint Louis.

There he walked, with slow steps, his head bent forward, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, his eye immovably fixed upon one point, always the same, which seemed studded with stars to him, and which was nothing more nor less than the corner of the Rue des Filles du Calvaire. As he approached the corner of that street, his face lighted up; a kind of joy illuminated his eye like an interior halo, he had a fascinated and softened expression, his lips moved vaguely, as if he were speaking to someone whom he did not see; he smiled faintly, and he advanced as slowly as he could. You would have said that even while wishing to reach some destination, he dreaded the moment when he should be near it. When there were but a few houses left between him and that street which appeared to attract him, his pace became so slow that at times you might have supposed he had ceased to move. The vacilla-

tion of his head and the fixedness of his eye reminded you of the needle seeking the pole. However long he succeeded in deferring it, he must arrive at last: he reached the Rue des Filles du Calvaire; then he stopped, he trembled, he put his head with a kind of gloomy timidity beyond the corner of the last house, and he looked into that street, and there was in that tragical look something which resembled the bewilderment of the impossible, and the reflection of a forbidden paradise. Then a tear, which had gradually gathered in the corner of his eye, grown large enough to fall, glided over his cheek, and sometimes stopped at his mouth. The old man tasted its bitterness. He remained thus a few minutes, as if he had been stone; then he returned by the same route and at the same pace; and, in proportion as he receded, that look was extinguished.

Little by little this old man ceased to go as far as the corner of the Rue des Filles du Calvaire; he stopped half-way down the Rue Saint Louis; sometimes a little further, sometimes a little nearer. One day, he stopped at the corner of the Rue Culture Sainte Catherine and looked at the Rue des Filles du Calvaire from the distance. Then he silently moved his head from right to left as if he were refusing himself something, and retraced his steps.

Very soon he no longer came even as far as the Rue Saint Louis. He reached the Rue Pavée, shook his head, and went back; then he no longer went beyond the Rue des Trois Pavillons; then he no longer passed the Blancs Manteaux. You would have said a pendulum which has not been wound up, and the oscillations of which are growing shorter ere they stop.

Every day he came out of his house at the same hour, he commenced the same walk, but he did not finish it, and, perhaps unconsciously, he continually shortened it. His whole countenance expressed this single idea: What is the use? The eye was dull; no more radiance. The tear also was gone; it no longer gathered at the corner of the lids; that thoughtful eye was dry. The old man's head was still bent forward; his chin quivered at times; the wrinkles of his thin neck were painful to behold. Sometimes, when the weather was bad, he carried an umbrella under his arm, which he never opened. The good women of the quartier said: "He is a natural." The children followed him laughing.

Marius had done what he deemed necessary and just. He supposed he had, for discarding Jean Valjean, without harshness, but without weakness, serious reasons.

As for Cosette, she was in none of these secrets; but it would

be hard to condemn her also. Her husband had had nothing to say to her, she experienced the vague, but clear pressure of his unspoken wishes, and obeyed blindly. Her obedience in this consisted in not remembering what Marius forgot. She had to make no effort for that. Without knowing why herself, and without affording any grounds for censure, her soul had so thoroughly become her husband's soul that whatever was covered with shadow in Marius's thought was obscured in hers.

We must not go too far, however; in what concerns Jean Valjean, this forgetfulness and this obliteration were only superficial. She was rather thoughtless than forgetful. At heart she really loved him whom she had so long called father. But she loved her husband still more. It was that which had somewhat swayed the balance of this heart, inclined in a single direction.

One day Jean Valjean went downstairs, took three steps into the street; he remained there a few minutes, then went upstairs again. This was the last oscillation of the pendulum. The next day he did not leave his room. The day after he did not leave his bed.

His portress, who prepared his frugal meal, some cabbage, or a few potatoes with a little pork, looked into the brown earthen plate, and exclaimed:

"Why, you didn't eat anything yesterday, poor dear man!"

"I will eat to-morrow."

"Or at Christmas. Why not eat to-day? Do people say: I will eat to-morrow! To leave me my whole plateful without touching it! My *cole slaugh*, which was so good!"

Jean Valjean took the old woman's hand:

"I promise to eat it," said he to her in his benevolent voice.

"I am not satisfied with you," answered the portress.

A week elapsed, and Jean Valjean had not taken a step in his room. He was still in bed. One evening he had difficulty in raising himself upon his elbow; he felt his wrist and found no pulse; his breathing was short, and stopped at intervals; he realised that he was weaker than he had been before. Then, undoubtedly under the pressure of some supreme desire, he made an effort, sat up in bed, and dressed himself. He put on his old working-man's garb. As he went out no longer, he had returned to it, and he preferred it. He was obliged to stop several times while dressing; the mere effort of putting on his waistcoat made the sweat roll down his forehead.

Since he had been alone, he had made his bed in the ante-

room, so as to occupy this desolate tenement as little as possible.

He opened the valise and took out Cosette's suit.

He spread it out upon his bed.

The Bishop's candlesticks were in their place, on the mantel. He took two wax tapers from a drawer, and put them into the candlesticks. Then, although it was still broad daylight, it was in summer, he lighted them. We sometimes see torches lighted thus in broad day in rooms where the dead lie.

Each step that he took in going from one piece of furniture to another exhausted him, and he was obliged to sit down. It was not ordinary fatigue which spends the strength that it may be renewed; it was the remnant of possible motion; it was exhausted life pressed out drop by drop in overwhelming efforts, never to be made again.

One of the chairs upon which he sank was standing before that mirror, so fatal for him, so providential for Marius, in which he had read Cosette's note, reversed on the blotter. He saw himself in this mirror, and did not recognise himself. He was eighty years old; before Marius's marriage, one would hardly have thought him fifty; this year had counted thirty. What was now upon his forehead was not the wrinkle of age, it was the mysterious mark of death. You perceived on it the impress of the relentless talon. His cheeks were sunken; the skin of his face was of that colour which suggests the idea of earth already above it; the corners of his mouth were depressed as in that mask which the ancients sculptured upon tombs.

"Oh!" exclaimed he within himself (pitiful cries, heard by God alone), "it is all over. I shall never see her more. Here I am all alone. My God! my God! I shall never see her again."

At this moment there was a rap at his door.

CHAPTER XXII

That very day, or rather that very evening, just as Marius had left the table and retired into his office, having a bundle of papers to study over, a servant handed him a letter, saying: "The person who wrote the letter is in the ante-chamber."

Cosette had taken grandfather's arm, and was walking in the garden.

A letter, as well as a man, may have a forbidding appearance. Coarse paper, clumsy fold, the mere sight of certain missives

displeases. It smelt of tobacco. Nothing awakens a reminiscence like an odour. Marius recognised this tobacco. He looked at the address: "To Monsieur, Monsieur the Baron Pommerci. In his hotel." The recognition of the tobacco made him recognise the handwriting. The Jondrette garret appeared before him.

Thus, strange freak of chance! one of the two traces which he had sought so long, the one which he had again recently made so many efforts to gain, and which he believed for ever lost, came of itself to him.

He broke the seal eagerly, and read:

"MONSIEUR BARON,

"The benefit with which you honour me will be reciprocal. I am in possession of a secret concerning an individual. This individual concerns you. I hold the secret at your disposition, desiring to have the honour of being useful to you. I will give you the simple means of driving from your honourable family this individual who has no right in it, Madame the Baroness being of high birth. The sanctuary of virtue could not cohabit longer with crime without abdicating.

"I attend in the ante-chamber the orders of Monsieur the Baron.

"With respect."

The letter was signed "THENARD."

The emotion of Marius was deep. He opened one of his secretary's drawers, took out some bank-notes, put them in his pocket, closed the secretary, and rang. His servant appeared.

"Show him in," said Marius.

Thenardier entered.

"Monsieur the Baron," he said, without other preamble, "you have read my letter?"

"How does that concern me?" inquired Marius. "Explain."

"Certainly, Monsieur the Baron. I will explain. I have a secret to sell you."

"What is this secret?"

"Monsieur Baron, you have in your house a robber and an assassin. This man has glided into your confidence, and almost into your family, under a false name. I am going to tell you his true name. And tell it to you for nothing."

"I am listening."

"His name is Jean Valjean."

"I know it."

"I am going to tell you, also for nothing, who he is."

"Say on."

"He is an old convict."

"I know it."

"You know it since I have had the honour of telling you."

"No. I knew it before."

The stranger resumed with a smile:

"I do not permit myself to contradict Monsieur the Baron. At all events, you must see that I am informed. Now, what I have to acquaint you with is known to myself alone. It concerns the fortune of Madame the Baroness. It is an extraordinary secret. It is for sale; I offer it to you first. Cheap; twenty thousand francs."

Marius looked at him steadily:

"I know your extraordinary secret just as I knew Jean Valjean's name, just as I know your name."

"My name?"

"Yes. I tell you that you are Thenardier."

"I deny it."

"And that you are a scoundrel. Here."

And Marius, taking a bank-note from his pocket, threw it in his face.

"Thanks! pardon! five hundred francs! Monsieur Baron!"

Thenardier, for it was indeed he, was strangely surprised; he would have been disconcerted if he could have been. He had come to bring astonishment, and he himself received it. This humiliation had been compensated by five hundred francs, and, all things considered, he accepted it; but he was none the less astounded.

Thenardier, it will be remembered, although he had been a neighbour of Marius, had never seen him, which is frequent in Paris; he had once heard some talk of his daughters about a very poor young man named Marius who lived in the house. He had written to him, without knowing him, the letter which we have seen. No connection was possible in his mind between that Marius and M. the Baron Pontmercy.

Through his daughter Azelma, however, whom he had put upon the track, and through his own researches, he had succeeded in finding out many things, and, from the depths of his darkness, he had been able to seize more than one mysterious clue. He had, by dint of industry, discovered, or, at least, by dint of induction, guessed who the man was whom he had met on a certain day in the Grand Sewer. From the man he had easily arrived at the name. He knew that Madame the Baroness Pontmercy was Cosette. But, in that respect, he intended to be prudent. Who was Cosette? He did not know exactly himself. He suspected indeed some illegitimacy. Fantine's story had always seemed to him ambiguous; but why

speaking of it? to get paid for his silence? He had, or thought he had, something better to sell than that. To men of Thenardier's nature, every dialogue is a battle. In that which was about to be commenced what was his situation? He did not know to whom he was speaking, but he knew about what he was speaking. He rapidly made this interior review of his forces while Marius remained absorbed in thought. At last he interrupted the silence.

"Thenardier, I have told you your name. Now your secret, what you came to make known to me, do you want me to tell you that? I, too, have my means of information. You shall see that I know more about it than you do. Jean Valjean, as you have said, is an assassin and a robber. A robber, because he robbed a rich manufacturer, M. Madeleine, whose ruin he caused; an assassin, because he assassinated the police-officer, Javert."

Thenardier cast upon Marius the sovereign glance of a beaten man, who lays hold on victory again, and who has just recovered in one minute all the ground which he had lost. But the smile returned immediately; the inferior before the superior can only have a skulking triumph, and Thenardier merely said to Marius:

"Monsieur Baron, we are on the wrong track."

"What!" replied Marius, "do you deny that? These are facts."

"They are chimeras. The confidence with which Monsieur the Baron honours me makes it my duty to tell him so. Before all things, truth and justice. I do not like to see people accused unjustly. Monsieur Baron, Jean Valjean never robbed Monsieur Madeleine, and Jean Valjean never killed Javert."

"You speak strongly; how is that?"

"For two reasons."

"What are they? tell me."

"The first is this: he did not rob Monsieur Madeleine, since it is Jean Valjean himself who was Monsieur Madeleine."

"What is that you are telling me?"

"And the second is this: he did not assassinate Javert, since Javert himself killed Javert."

"What do you mean?"

"That Javert committed suicide."

"Prove it! prove it!" cried Marius, beside himself.

Thenardier took from his pocket a large envelope of grey paper, which seemed to contain folded sheets of different sizes.

"I have my documents," said he, with calmness.

And he added:

"Monsieur Baron, in your interest I wished to find out Jean

Valjean to the bottom. I say that Jean Valjean and Madeleine are the same man; and I say that Javert had no other assassin than Javert: and when I speak I have the proofs. Not manuscript proofs; writing is suspicious: writing is complaisant, but proofs in print."

While speaking, Thenardier took out of the envelope two newspapers, yellow, faded, and strongly saturated with tobacco. One of these two newspapers, broken at all the folds, and falling in square pieces, seemed much older than the other.

"Two facts, two proofs," said Thenardier. And unfolding the two papers, he handed them to Marius.

One, the oldest, a copy of the *Drapeau Blanc*, of the 25th of July, 1823, established the identity of M. Madeleine and Jean Valjean. The other, a *Moniteur* of the 15th of June, 1832, verified the suicide of Javert, adding that it appeared from a verbal report made by Javert to the prefect that, taken prisoner in the barricade of the Rue de la Chanvrière, he had owed his life to the magnanimity of an insurgent who, though he had him at the muzzle of his pistol, instead of blowing out his brains, had fired into the air.

Marius could not doubt. Jean Valjean, suddenly growing grand, arose from the cloud. Marius could not restrain a cry of joy:

"Well, then, this unhappy man is a wonderful man! He is Madeleine, the providence of a whole region! He is Jean Valjean, the saviour of Javert! He is a hero! he is a saint!"

"He is not a saint, and he is not a hero," said Thenardier. "He is an assassin and a robber."

And he added with the tone of a man who begins to feel some authority in himself: "Let us be calm."

Robber, assassin; these words, which Marius supposed were gone, yet which came back, fell upon him like a shower of ice.

"Again," said he.

"Still," said Thenardier, "Jean Valjean did not rob Madeleine; but he is a robber. He did not kill Javert; but he is a murderer. What I have to reveal to you is absolutely unknown. It belongs to the unpublished. But I am somewhat fatigued; allow me to take a chair."

Marius sat down, and made signs for him to sit down.

Thenardier installed himself in a cappadine chair, took up the two newspapers, thrust them back into the envelope, and muttered, striking the *Drapeau Blanc* with his nail: "it cost me some hard work to get this one." This done, he crossed his legs and lay back in his chair, an attitude characteristic of people who are sure of what they are saying, then entered into the subject seriously, and emphasising his words:

"Monsieur Baron, on the 6th of June, 1832, about a year ago, the day of the *émeute*, a man was in the Grand Sewer of Paris, near where the sewer empties into the Seine, between the Pont des Invalides and the Pont d'Iéna."

Marius suddenly drew his chair near Thenardier's. Thenardier noticed this movement, and continued with the deliberation of a speaker who holds his interlocutor fast, and who feels the palpitation of his adversary beneath his words:

"This man, compelled to conceal himself, for reasons foreign to politics, however, had taken the sewer for his dwelling, and had a key to it. It was, I repeat it, the 6th of June; it might have been eight o'clock in the evening. The man heard a noise in the sewer. Very much surprised, he hid himself, and watched. It was a sound of steps, somebody was walking in the darkness; somebody was coming in his direction. Strange to say, there was another man in the sewer beside him. The grating of the outlet of the sewer was not far off. A little light which came from it enabled him to recognise the newcomer, and to see that this man was carrying something on his back. He walked bent over. The man who was walking bent over was an old convict, and what he was carrying upon his shoulders was a corpse. Assassination *in flagrante delicto*, if ever there was such a thing. As for the robbery, it follows of course; nobody kills a man for nothing. This convict was going to throw this corpse into the river. It is a noteworthy fact, that before reaching the grating of the outlet, this convict, who came from a distance in the sewer, had been compelled to pass through a horrible quagmire in which it would seem that he might have left the corpse; but the sewer-men working upon the quagmire might, the very next day, have found the assassinated man, and that was not the assassin's game. He preferred to go through the quagmire with his load, and his efforts must have been terrible; it is impossible to put one's life in greater peril; I do not understand how he came out of it alive."

Marius's chair drew still nearer. Thenardier took advantage of it to draw a long breath. He continued:

"Monsieur Baron, a sewer is not the Champs de Mars. One lacks everything there, even room. When two men are in a sewer, they must meet each other. That is what happened. The resident and the traveller were compelled to say good-day to each other, to their mutual regret. The traveller said to the resident: 'You see what I have on my back, I must get out, you have the key, give it to me.' This convict was a man of terrible strength. There was no refusing him. Still, he who had the key parleyed, merely to gain time. He examined the dead man, but he could see nothing, except that

ne was young, well dressed, apparently a rich man, and all disfigured with blood. While he was talking, he found means to cut and tear off from behind, without the assassin perceiving it, a piece of the assassinated man's coat. A piece of evidence, you understand: means of getting trace of the affair, and proving the crime upon the criminal. He put this piece of evidence in his pocket. After which he opened the grating, let the man out with his incumbrance on his back, shut the grating again and escaped, little caring to be mixed up with the remainder of the adventure, and especially desiring not to be present when the assassin should throw the assassinated man into the river. You understand now. He who was carrying the corpse was Jean Valjean; he who had the key is now speaking to you, and the piece of the coat——"

Thenardier finished the phrase by drawing from his pocket and holding up on a level with his eyes, between his thumbs and his forefingers, a strip of ragged black cloth, covered with dark stains.

Marius had risen, pale, hardly breathing, his eye fixed upon the scrap of black cloth, and, without uttering a word, without losing sight of this rag, he retreated to the wall, and, with his right hand stretched behind him, groped about for a key which was in the lock of a closet near the chimney. He found this key, opened the closet, and thrust his arm into it without looking, and without removing his startled eyes from the fragment that Thenardier held up.

Meanwhile Thenardier continued.

"Monsieur Baron, I have the strongest reasons to believe that the assassinated young man was an opulent stranger drawn into a snare by Jean Valjean, and the bearer of an enormous sum."

"The young man was myself, and there is the coat!" cried Marius, and he threw an old black coat, covered with blood, upon the carpet.

Then, snatching the fragment from Thenardier's hands, he bent down over the coat, and applied the piece to the cut skirt. The edges fitted exactly, and the strip completed the coat.

Thenardier was petrified. He thought this "I am floored."

Marius rose up, quivering, desperate, flashing.

He felt in his pocket, and walked, furious, towards Thenardier, offering him and almost pushing into his face his fist full of five hundred and a thousand franc notes.

"You are a wretch! you are a liar! a slanderer, a scoundrel. You came to accuse this man, you have justified him; you wanted to destroy him, you have succeeded only in glorifying

him. And it is you who are a robber! and it is you who are an assassin! I saw you, Thenardier Jondrette, in that den on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital. I know enough about you to send you to the galleys, and further even, if I wished. Here, there are a thousand francs, braggart that you are!"

And he threw a bill for a thousand francs to Thenardier.

"Ah! Jondrette Thenardier, vile knave! let this be a lesson to you, peddler of secrets, trader in mysteries, fumbler in the dark, wretch! Take these five hundred francs, and leave this place! Waterloo protects you."

"Waterloo!" muttered Thenardier, pocketing the five hundred francs with the thousand francs.

"Yes, assassin! you saved the life of a colonel, there——"

"Of a general," said Thenardier, raising his head.

"Of a colonel!" replied Marius with a burst of passion. "I would not give a farthing for a general. And you came here to act out your infamy! I tell you that you have committed every crime. Go! out of my sight! Be happy only, that is all that I desire. Ah, monster! there are three thousand francs more. Take them. You will start to-morrow for America, with your daughter. I will see to your departure, bandit, and I will count out to you then twenty thousand francs. Go and get hung elsewhere!"

"Monsieur, Baron," answered Thenardier, bowing to the ground, "eternal gratitude."

And Thenardier went out, comprehending nothing, astounded and transported with this sweet crushing under sacks of gold and with this thunderbolt bursting upon his head in bank-notes.

Thunderstruck he was, but happy also; and he would have been very sorry to have had a lightning rod against that thunderbolt.

Let us finish with this man at once. Two days after the events which we are now relating, he left, through Marius's care, for America, under a false name, with his daughter Azelma, provided with a draft upon New York for twenty thousand francs. Thenardier, the moral misery of Thenardier, the broken-down bourgeois, was irremediable; he was in America what he had been in Europe. The touch of a wicked man is often enough to corrupt a good deed and to make an evil result spring from it. With Marius's money, Thenardier became a slaver.

As soon as Thenardier was out of doors, Marius ran to the garden where Cosette was still walking:

"Cosette! Cosette!" cried he. "Come! come quick!

Let us go. Oh, my God! It was he who saved my life! Let us not lose a minute! Put on your shawl."

Cosette thought him mad, and obeyed.

He did not breathe, he put his hand upon his heart to repress its beating. He walked to and fro with rapid strides, he embraced Cosette: "Oh, Cosette! I am an unhappy man!" said he.

Marius was in a maze. He began to see in this Jean Valjean a strangely lofty and saddened form. An unparalleled virtue appeared before him, supreme and mild, humble in its immensity. The convict was transfigured into Christ. Marius was bewildered by this marvel. He did not know exactly what he saw, but it was grand.

In a moment, a fiacre was at the door.

Marius helped Cosette in and sprang in himself.

"Driver," said he, "Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7."

The fiacre started.

"Oh, what happiness!" said Cosette. "Rue de l'Homme Armé! I dared not speak to you of it again. We are going to see Monsieur Jean."

"Your father! Cosette, your father more than ever. Cosette, I see it. You told me that you never received the letter which I sent you by Gavroche. It must have fallen into his hands. Cosette, he went to the barricade to save me. As it is a necessity for him to be an angel, on the way he saved others, he saved Javert. He snatched me out of that gulf to give me to you. He carried me on his back in that frightful sewer. Oh, I am an unnatural ingrate! Cosette, after having been your providence, he was mine. Only think that there was a horrible quagmire, enough to drown him a hundred times, to drown him in the mire, Cosette! he carried me through that. I had fainted, I saw nothing. I heard nothing, I could know nothing of my own fate. We are going to bring him back, take him with us; whether he will or no, he shall never leave us again. If he is only at home! If we only find him! I will pass the rest of my life in venerating him. Yes, that must be it, do you see, Cosette? Gavroche must have handed my letter to him. It is all explained. You understand."

Cosette did not understand a word.

"You are right," said she to him.

Meanwhile the fiacre rolled on.

CHAPTER XXIII

At the knock which he heard at his door, Jean Valjean turned his head.

"Come in," said he, feebly.

The door opened. Cosette and Marius appeared.

Cosette rushed into the room.

Marius remained upon the threshold, leaning against the casing of the door.

"Cosette!" said Jean Valjean, and he rose in his chair, his arms stretched out and trembling, haggard, livid, terrible with immense joy in his eyes.

Cosette, stifled with emotion, fell upon Jean Valjean's breast.

"Father!" said she.

Jean Valjean, beside himself stammered:

"Cosette! she? you, Madame? it is you, Cosette? I thought I should never see her again. Only think, Monsieur Pontmercy, that at the moment you came in I was saying to myself: It is over. There is her little dress; I am a miserable man, I shall never see Cosette again; I was saying that at the very moment you were coming up the stairs. Was not I silly? I was as silly as that! But we reckon without God. God said: You think that you are going to be abandoned, dolt? No. No, it shall not come to pass like that. Come, here is a poor good-man who has need of an angel. And the angel comes; and I see my Cosette again! and I see my darling Cosette again! Oh, I was very miserable!"

And Cosette said:

"How naughty to have left us in this way! Where have you been? why were you away so long? Why did not you let us know? Do you know that you are very much changed. Oh, the naughty father! he has been sick, and we did not know it! Here, Marius, feel his hand, how cold it is!"

"So you are here, Monsieur Pontmercy; you forgive me!" said Jean Valjean.

At these words, all that was swelling in Marius's heart found an outlet, he broke forth:

"Cosette, do you hear? that is the way with him! he begs my pardon, and do you know what he has done for me, Cosette? he has saved my life. He bore me through death in every form, which he put aside from me, and which he accepted for himself. All courage, all virtue, all heroism, all sanctity; he has it all, Cosette; that man is an angel! Oh, my God! when I think it was by accident that I learned it all!

We are going to carry you back. You are a part of us. You are her father and mine. You shall not spend another day in this horrid house. Do not imagine that you will be here to-morrow."

"To-morrow," said Jean Valjean, "I shall not be here, but I shall not be at your house."

"What do you mean?" replied Marius. "Ah now, we shall allow no more journeys. You shall never leave us again. You belong to us. We will not let you go."

Cosette took both the old man's hands in her own.

"My God!" said she, "your hands are colder yet. Are you sick? Are you suffering?"

"No," answered Jean Valjean. "I am very well. Only——"
He stopped.

"Only what?"

"I shall die in a few minutes."

Cosette and Marius shuddered.

"Die!" exclaimed Marius.

"Yes, but that is nothing," said Jean Valjean.

Marius, petrified, gazed upon the old man.

Cosette uttered a piercing cry:

"Father! my father! you shall live. You are going to live. I will have you live, do you hear!"

Jean Valjean raised his head towards her with adoration.

"Oh yes, forbid me to die. Who knows? I shall obey perhaps. I was just dying when you came. That stopped me, it seemed to me that I was born again."

"You are full of strength and life," exclaimed Marius. "Do you think people die like that? You have had trouble, you shall have no more. I ask your pardon now, and that on my knees! You shall live, and live with us, and live long. We will take you back. Both of us here will have but one thought henceforth, your happiness!"

"You see," added Cosette in tears, "that Marius says you will not die."

Jean Valjean continued to smile. They heard these almost inarticulate words come from his lips:

"It is nothing to die; it is frightful not to live."

Suddenly he arose. These returns of strength are sometimes a sign also of the death-struggle. He walked with a firm step to the wall, put aside Marius, who offered to assist him, took down from the wall the little copper crucifix which hung there, came back, and sat down with all the freedom of motion of perfect health, and said, in a loud voice, laying the crucifix on the table:

"Behold the great martyr."

Then his breast sank in, his head wavered, as if the dizziness of the tomb seized him, and his hands, resting upon his knees, began to clutch at his pantaloons.

The agony of death may be said to meander. It goes, comes, advances towards the grave, and returns towards life. There is some groping in the act of dying.

Jean Valjean, after this semi-syncope, gathered strength, shook his forehead as if to throw off the darkness, and became almost completely lucid once more. He took a fold of Cosette's sleeve and kissed it.

The portress had come up, and was looking through the half-open door. Marius motioned her away, but he could not prevent that good, zealous woman from crying to the dying man before she went:

"Do you want a priest?"

"I have one," answered Jean Valjean.

And, with his finger, he seemed to designate a point above his head, where, you would have said, he saw some one.

It is probable that the Bishop was indeed a witness of this death-agony.

Cosette slipped a pillow under his back gently.

Jean Valjean resumed:

"Come closer, come closer, both of you. I love you dearly. Oh, it is good to die so! You, too, you love me, my Cosette. I knew very well that you still had some affection for your old Goodman. How kind you are to put this cushion under my back! You will weep for me a little, will you not? Not too much. I do not wish you to have any deep grief. Cosette, do you see your little dress, there on the bed? do you recognise it? Yet it was only ten years ago. How time passes! We have been very happy. It is over. My children, do not weep, I am not going very far, I shall see you from there. You will only have to look when it is night, you will see me smile. Cosette, do you remember Montfermeil? You were in the wood, you were very much frightened; do you remember when I took the handle of the water-bucket? That was the first time I touched your poor little hand. It was so cold! /' / you had red hands in those days, Mademoiselle; your hands are very white now. And the great doll! do you remember? you called her Catherine. You regretted that you did not carry her to the convent. How you made me laugh sometimes, my sweet angel! When it had rained, you launched spears of straw in the gutters, and you watched them. One day, I gave you a willow battledore, and a shuttlecock with yellow, blue, and green feathers. You have forgotten it. You were so cunning when you were little! You played! You put cherries

in your ears. Those are things of the past. The forests through which we have passed with our child, the trees under which we have walked, the convents in which we have hidden, the games, the free laughter of childhood, all is in shadow. I imagined that all that belonged to me. There was my folly. Those Thenardiers were wicked. We must forgive them. Cosette, the time has come to tell you the name of your mother. Her name was Fantine. Remember that name: Fantine. Fall on your knees whenever you pronounce it. She suffered much. And loved you much. Her measure of unhappiness was as full as yours of happiness. Such are the distributions of God. He is on high, he sees us all, and he knows what he does in the midst of his great stars. So I am going away, my children. Love each other dearly always. There is scarcely anything else in the world but that: to love one another. You will think sometimes of the poor old man who died here. O my Cosette! it is not my fault, indeed, if I have not seen you all this time, it broke my heart; I went as far as the corner of the street; I must have seemed strange to the people who saw me pass, I looked like a crazy man; once I went out with no hat. My children, I do not see very clearly now; I had some things more to say, but it makes no difference. Think of me a little. You are blessed creatures. I do not know what is the matter with me; I see a light. Come nearer. I die happy. Let me put my hands upon your dear beloved heads."

Cosette and Marius fell on their knees, overwhelmed, choked with tears, each grasping one of Jean Valjean's hands. Those august hands moved no more.

He had fallen backwards, the light from the candlesticks fell upon him; his white face looked up towards heaven; he let Cosette and Marius cover his hands with kisses; he was dead.

The night was starless and very dark. Without doubt, in the gloom some mighty angel was standing, with outstretched wings, awaiting the soul.

THE END

